K. Mac Kenna

POLITICAL ESSAYS

RELATIVE TO THE

AFFAIRS OF IRELAND,

IN

1791, 1792, AND 1793;

WITH

REMARKS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE OF THAT COUNTRY.

BY

THEOBALD M'KENNA, Esq.

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THESE

ESSAYS

Are with Sentiments of great Reſpect and Friendſhip

INSCRIBED TO THE

Right Hon. DENNIS BROWNE.

WRITTEN in the hope of reconciling the intereſts of the people, with thoſe of the Conſtitution of Ireland, (which had too long been ſuppoſed at variance, (the deſign may recommend them to a Gentleman, who uniformly and with ſteadineſs ſupported both.—To whom belongs the honour, of having firſt introduced into the Parliament of Ireland, the moſt important queſtion, which has ever been deliberated in that aſſembly;—to whoſe

firmneſs the nation is indebted for having aſſerted (and during ſome time ſingle) its cauſe, againſt an oppoſition, which ordinary zeal would not have dared to encounter.—And who has upon all occaſions ſignalized himſelf, as its warm friend, its earneſt, and its aſſiduous advocate.

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PREFACE.

Remarks on the preſent State of Ireland.

THE progreſs of civilization has been more ſlow in Ireland than in the adjacent nations: even recent incidents ſeem to indicate the courſe of juſtice embarraſſed, and the people untractable. When it is inquired, wherefore the reduction of that kingdom under the dominion of law ſhould have been attended with ſo much difficulty; thoſe who adopt the firſt argument that glances upon their minds, accuſe the ferocious or eccentric character of the inhabitants. But the original frame of Government in Ireland, the complexion of its inſtitutions, were calculated to create barbariſm; and whilſt any part of the ſyſtem ſubſiſted, the redemption of the land from that condition muſt have proved tardy and imperfect. Before the reformation, the inhabitants were divided into thoſe of Engliſh or of Iriſh race, ſince that event, into adherents to the Roman Catholic, or to the Proteſtant religion. In

both caſes, one party was ſelected as the peculiar favourite of the ſtate, and the other, including a vaſt majority of the people, rejected from confidence, often refuſed protection, and repreſented to be irreconcileably hoſtile. To unkind inſtitutions they were of courſe refractory; under a ſuſpicious Government they became reluctant ſubjects. Whoever ſhall impartially conſider this ſtatement, will find in theſe general cauſes, an ample apology for the precarious ſettlement of Ireland, and for the unequal proficiency of that kingdom in the arts of refinement ſo generally diffuſed through the reſt of Europe.

Before the preſent reign, Ireland was ruled by that moſt reprehenſible ſpecies of Government, a cloſely reſtricted Ariſtocracy. The miniſters, occupied with the center of the empire, ſuffered the care of this remote province to devolve upon almoſt any perſon who would undertake to preſerve it free from inſurrection. From this ſubordinate adminiſtration ſprang the laws againſt Roman Catholics, which diſcountenancing the induſtry of the major part of the claſs devoted to induſtrious occupation, ſtruck at the root of national proſperity, and cruſhed it in the very infancy; and by its connivance were impoſed the reſtrictions upon commerce, which, if any means of public good eſcaped the former devaſtation, completed the work of ruin by intercepting and fruſtrating them.

His Majeſty's acceſſion was the æra of a new ſyſtem of politics, more wiſe, more honeſt, and more

more dignified. Lord Townſhend had the honour of commencing the aſſimilation of the Iriſh with the Britiſh Conſtitution, which, under the Adminiſtration of the Earl of Weſtmorland, has been accompliſhed to a degree highly deſerving the nation's gratitude. An extenſive revolution has been effected, the moſt ſalutary which the world has for a long time witneſſed; not ſtained with the reproach of private ſuffering, and fatal only to abuſes.

We muſt recogniſe, as the primary ſource of this improvement, the maxims of a wiſe reign, and the character of our preſent Sovereign. A ſeries of excellent laws, enacted during the ſpace of about twenty-five years, have converted the political regulations of Ireland from a miſhapen maſs to a ſalutary code; from titular freedom to ſubſtantial privileges. In the degree of civil liberty, enjoyed by her ſubjects, Ireland yields not at this day to any country; in that of religious liberty, is ſecond only to America; in the latter, ſhe far ſurpaſſes; in the former, rivals Great Britain. If practice does not as yet correſpond with this aſſertion, and preſent at every ſide the advantages which theoretically may be pointed out, let it be recollected, that the ferment attendant upon a vaſt change of opinions and intereſts, has not yet ſubſided; a few years may be requiſite in order entirely to efface the evil uſages and habits which aroſe under the former vicious ſyſtem; but the moſt valuable and efficacious reform has been

accompliſhed :* good laws have been ſubſtituted to thoſe which were reprehenſible. The train of cauſe and effect is laid, which, unleſs the progreſs of it be unwiſely interrupted, muſt produce

* The late proſecutions againſt reſpectable men, upon an accuſation of abetting the diſturbances of the lower orders in the counties of Louth, Meath, &c. which, upon trial proved to be entirely unfounded, may be well alledged as detracting from this eulogium, and cannot eſcape the notice of thoſe who are converſant with the affairs of Ireland.

Without queſtion it is a diſgrace to the public juſtice of that country, that upon the teſtimony of the vileſt of mankind, and upon charges improbable in themſelves, and which upon inveſtigation appeared not be ſupported by any circumſtance, perſons of credit ſhould be ſubjected to the penalty of priſon, and the diſgrace of thoſe foul imputations, ſedition and murder. The liberty of the ſubject requires upon this head ſome farther ſecurity; and the character of the country ſome ſignal atonement, either by exemplary puniſhment of the offenders, or more ſtrict laws againſt frivolous and malicious proſecution: and it is not to be doubted that a government, which has in ſo many inſtances merited the praiſe of patriotiſm, will on this occaſion vindicate its own honour, and increaſe the obligations of the people.

This injury is not confined to the individuals who immediately were affected. It is a national concern that the reputation of the country ſhould be tarniſhed. Every newſpaper in Great Britain, and probably in Europe, has on the faith of theſe charges circulated the intelligence, that in Ireland there were to be found opulent men, ſo much diſaffected to the preſent ſettlement of the country, that they employed their credit and wealth in turbulent and ſeditious practices. We deplore in Ireland the abſence of commerce and manufacture. Can any country offer pretenſions to commercial credit, which ſuffers its reputation to be raſhly defamed, and which permits ſuch outrages?

of itſelf the happineſs of Ireland. Where blemiſhes remain, the inconvenience falls on thoſe to whom the burden is moſt light, and the advantage is to the people. Without queſtion, the moſt ample conceſſion, which in the entire extent of the Britiſh territory has been made to the ſubject, ſince the grant of Magna Charta, was contained in the bill that in 1793 communicated political privileges to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. By this act, about thirty thouſand electors were added to the conſtituent body, and every man in the nation, when legally entitled by his property, was authoriſed to enrol himſelf in that number;—the qualification to vote at county elections, is at preſent more diffuſed in Ireland than in Great Britain.

A judicious adminiſtration having thus met the public ſentiment, we now may calmly, without acrimony, and without the danger of reviving contentious politics, contemplate this ſubject.

> Juvat ire et Dorica caſtra
> Deſertoſque videre locos, littuſque relictum.

The Eſſays ſubmitted to the public in this collection, formed a part of the controverſy, which agitated the public mind on this occaſion. They were deſigned to explain the condition of the Iriſh Catholics, to apply in their favour the principles of civil liberty, much admired among their countrymen, and not long ſince ſtrenuouſly and ſucceſsfully urged, againſt what was uſually deno-

denominated, the uſurpations of Great Britain. The author hoped, that by creating a popular diſcuſſion on the ſubject, many would diſcover the futility of their prejudices, and be won over to that change of ſentiment, which divers circumſtances have ſince happily effected. The caſe of the Catholics is endeavoured to be merged in that of the people, or rather both are repreſented to be blended and inſeparable. The argument is not grounded upon the plea of toleration, nor upon any merit to which as a religious ſect that people may pretend; ſtill leſs upon claims connected with Democracy; a vaſt body, we may almoſt ſay, a nation, received from their anceſtors certain rites and doctrines from which they would not depart. That they ſhould alter their religious tenets, would prove rather a miſchief than an advantage to the ſtate,* and to

* I have noticed (page 63 and the following) the great and abſolute importance of preſerving in Ireland the Roman Catholic Religion, as eſſential to the happineſs of the people, and the preſervation of good order in the kingdom. Let me be excuſed for having in a ſubject ſo venerable, introduced mere political conſiderations.

It will follow of courſe, that the religion ought to be preſerved upon a reſpectable footing, and thoſe perſons of ſuperior rank, who belong to that body, rather encouraged to remain in, than enticed from it. Under every ſyſtem, the vulgar are but too prone to mix their own fancies with the duties or the rites which are enjoined to them; it requires the example of perſons eminent for rank, and for the advantage of education, to check this propenſity, to teach the people veneration for religion, and guard them againſt the danger of degenerating into ſuperſtition.

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to inflict penalties for adhering to them was detrimental to the political and commercial intereſts of the kingdom. The condition of this people is conſidered with a general view to the intereſts of the empire, and a particular reference to the influence of their ſituation upon the internal affairs of Ireland. A queſtion which involved concerns ſo immenſe, floating for two years upon the public mind, preſſed with firmneſs, and reſiſted with aſperity, muſt occaſionally have connected itſelf with various topics, muſt have been touched by various incidents, and complicated with the deſigns of various parties: theſe have not been omitted in the diſcuſſion. Whilſt the religious or political deſignation, *Iriſh Catholics*, includes a conſiderable portion of the ſubjects of the Britiſh empire, the relation which they bear to the ſtate, cannot be ſlighted, or their concerns deemed unimportant.

It is, indeed, to be regretted that the affairs of Ireland, although its fate be intimately interwoven with that of Great Britain, attract leſs attention on this ſide than thoſe of almoſt any other nation. It would exceed the limits of this Preface to enter extenſively into proofs of the importance of the leſſer to the greater member of the confederacy. At a period probably not remote,* I ſhall, unleſs the ſubject fall into the hands of ſome perſon more capable, attempt to inveſtigate the various political and commercial queſtions which have agi-

* In *A View of the Commercial and Political State of Ireland under George the Third.*

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tated Ireland for ſome time back, and endeavour to trace generally, and deſcribe the very great proficiency which that nation has made both in trade and legiſlation under our preſent Sovereign. It may perhaps tend to reduce the ſuperiority which Great Britain affects, to prove that a land, which ſhe ſeems not to conſider with great attention, contributes more than the reſt of the world to her happineſs, nay, to her exiſtence.

The object of theſe arguments having been in a great means attained, to ſome they will appear obſolete: but if any part of them has on former occaſions been found competent to produce a ſenſation on the public mind, it ſtill may tend to prove, that the emancipation of the Catholics was an eligible good, not as it has upon ſome occaſions been raſhly repreſented, an evil of neceſſity. It were treating a great political queſtion with undignified levity, to ſuppoſe, that in acceding to it, temporary convenience, rather than national good, and the propriety of the meaſure, was conſulted. The doctrine could not in any caſe be innocent, in the preſent inſtance it is eminently reprehenſible. Every friend to the Britiſh empire muſt deſire to ſee perfect harmony eſtabliſhed in Ireland; to ſee the public mind tranquilliſed and turned to the contemplation of the immenſe advantages acquired by the people. But harmony will never be reſtored, or good temper eſtabliſhed, if the confidence of imaginary ſucceſs inſpire vanity to the one party, and the other be taught to regret, as a conceſſion extorted from weakneſs, the late

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glorious correction of the Iriſh Conſtitution. Thoſe men who calculate their chance of importance rather upon the attachment of a party, than upon national eſteem, may deſire to promote a ſpirit of faction in their reſpective bodies; they may cling as a deſperate hope to national diviſion; but it is the common intereſt of the crown, of the great proprietors, and of the nation, that the people ſhould amicably coaleſce, convinced that the emancipation of the Catholics was a wiſe and ſalutary regulation, adapted to the ſituation, and reſulting inevitably from the circumſtances of Ireland. Let us review the ſtate of that country, previous to the change in its domeſtic policy, made by the firſt alteration of the Popery code, and the influence of that arrangement in producing the more liberal conceſſion of privileges in the laſt ſeſſion of Parliament. The original correction of the ſyſtem will appear to have been indiſpenſable to the welfare of Ireland, and that made by the late act, to have been a neceſſary conſequence of the former.

The reformation had been preſented to the Iriſh nation under an ungracious aſpect, and accompanied by many harſh acts, which muſt have neceſſarily rendered it unacceptable. It was made, by the Government during the laſt century, a pretext for haraſſing the people; the conduct was countenanced by the fanaticiſm which prevailed in England, and aſſiſted by a ſimilar diſpoſition in the perſons, who were from thence tranſplanted into Ireland.

The factions thus unhappily created, were in the height at the revolution. The war, which took place on that occaſion, was not ſo much the effect of the political queſtion, as a conteſt animated by private intereſt, and religious antipathy. That party which depended on the aid of France was diſappointed; and that which the arms of England eſpouſed, remained thenceforward the unrivalled and undiſputed maſters of the country.

Actuated either by the wantonneſs of power, or the vigilance of authority, the victors followed up their ſucceſs by a proſcription of their adverſaries. As their religion appeared to be the peculiar characteriſtic of the party, ſevere penalties were annexed to the profeſſion of it. The Roman Catholics in Ireland were excluded from all truſt and emolument under the ſtate, deprived of every political privilege, and rendered incapable of acquiring permanent property.

In three provinces, that is, in a circuit of about four-fifths of the kingdom, the weight of theſe diſabilities fell exactly on the perſons, who by their rank were deſtined to form the uſeful claſſes of yeomen and manufacturers. Theſe laws ſeemed to have been levelled againſt a ſect, but in their operation involved a people. They proved to be ſtatutes to interrupt the courſe of cultivation, to repreſs the growth of capital, to encourage the exportation of money acquired at home, and to reſtrain the importation of property amaſſed in foreign countries. For in the former caſe, men could not be expected

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to remain, nor in the latter to return, where ſecurity was denied to them. This conſideration merits to be held in view; it explains the miſchievous tendency of the ſyſtem. The proſperity of the nation could not advance, whilſt its producing hands were fettered, deprived of the great inducement, and of the reward of induſtry. The diſcouragement was of courſe removed, ſo far as it affected property, when extenſive deſigns of improvement came to be adopted.*

Without denying very honourable feelings to the perſons who promoted this original conceſſion, we do not reſt their claim to public eſteem, as has been uſual even by themſelves, upon mere benevolence. To relieve a petty ſect might have been eſteemed a charitable exerciſe of power, but it was an act of patriotiſm to unbind the huſbandmen of Ireland. The Roman Catholic body does not hold its ſituation in that kingdom by a tenure ſo frail, as ſentimental emotions, which the next caprice may vary. It is the charter of that people, that induſtry muſt be cramped, unleſs the induſtrious be

* In the year 1778. It has been uſual to attribute the very increaſed proſperity of Ireland ſince that period to the corn laws, which were ſuppoſed to have turned the public attention to tillage. This meaſure was certainly not indifferent, but the general improvement of national welfare may be more ſatisfactorily accounted for, by the conſiderable ſums of money either introduced into the country, or retained in it, in conſequence of the encouragement given to the Roman Catholics. It may alſo be accounted for by the general amendment of the laws, of which that was the principal article.

encouraged; they are linked with the fortune of the ſtate, which through them alone can riſe, with them muſt ſuffer adverſity.

Yielding to the exigencies of the times, and to the counſel of many intelligent men who had directed their attention to the affairs of Ireland, the legiſlature ventured in 1778 to new-model its domeſtic policy. The Roman Catholic people were permitted to approach to the ſtate in a relation of more ſtrict and intimate connection. But the excluſion from political privileges remaining untouched, a ſubordinate rank was ſtill aſſigned to them.

The ancient ſyſtem was compact; the modern, like every meaſure reluctantly adopted by temporiſing policy, ſeemed rather likely to ſerve as a beacon for ſedition. The object of the former was to ſecure to one part of the people a dominion over the remainder, and this was rendered yet more certain by the ſubſerviency of all to Great Britain. Aware that wealth is the key of power, it prohibited thoſe to acquire property, whom it deſtined to obedience. Under this diſcipline, the country languiſhed. When the ground appeared untenable, it were a more wiſe and manly policy, at once to have added the honourable character of Citizen to the profitable one of Proprietor. By this firſt meaſure, (if expected to produce any effect,) the formation of an opulent body of Roman Catholics muſt have been protected and encouraged; and what experience of human nature could ſuggeſt

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that the rich would be content to ſerve? That a numerous claſs of men were to be prevailed on, without cheriſhing an aſpiring hope for themſelves or their poſterity, to form an order of hereditary money jobbers, excluded for ever, not from dignity alone, but from the degree of reſpect which moderate rank demands, and which was daily enjoyed under their eyes by perſons, according to vulgar opinion, not equally entitled? When the greater privilege had been ſurrendered, that of effecting a permanent eſtabliſhment, of acquiring and accumulating property, (the all-powerful engine by which, in ſocial life, the many are ever made ſubſervient to the few) it ſeems nugatory to have made a ſtand at theſe minor rights, which really were included in the former grant, and ought to have been annexed to it. A man could ſcarcely effect any purpoſe by his vote as an elector, which he might not attempt with more certainty of ſucceſs by means of his authority as a landed, or his influence as a monied Proprietor.

The Roman Catholics of Ireland compoſe not the landed or the monied, but the producing intereſt, with a ſmall intermixture of the other two. A body thus conſtituted can never aſpire to ſway; its intemperance may be baffled and chaſtiſed by any government, but a wiſe government will never refuſe to it the reaſonable indulgence, of eſtabliſhing an equality of rights among men whoſe conditions are ſimilar. If

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the country were to be enriched, its reſource was in that people; if to be defended, many diſtricts could not afford a ſufficient number of any other deſcription to mount guard upon the county priſons. Immediately after the Revolution, whilſt the ſettlement was recent, there were in Ireland, many Engliſh Proteſtants in that rank, from which a national militia might have been conſtituted; but the eminent opportunities of acquiring fortune, which that claſs of men enjoyed for near a century, had elevated them now above the drudgery of ſervice. Unleſs the King could confide to his Iriſh ſubjects the defence of their own country, he muſt have appropriated to that duty ſuch a portion of the general force of the empire, as muſt effectually preclude him from interfering in the politics of Europe. Thus we ſee how unreaſonable was the requeſt of thoſe gentlemen, who hoped that the crown ſhould controvert the deſires of the greater part of the Iriſh people; and we ſee equally that the formation of a Militia (without any of the boiſterous and irritating circumſtances which were made to accompany their demand) muſt have inſured to the Catholics a degree of grace and conceſſion, equal to that contained in the act of the laſt ſeſſion. Without their aſſiſtance, the kingdom could not be protected, and it would have been prepoſterous to arm them, unleſs an inconvenience were removed, which every individual pointed to,

as rendering his condition leſs commodious than that of his neighbour.

This people had hitherto appeared ſo manageable, ſo patient of the incapacities impoſed upon them, and ſo little intercourſe prevailed between the two great denominations of the Iriſh, that the progreſſive developement of a public principle in the party ſubject, was unnoticed and unſuſpected by the party dominant. But the friendſhip of the former was no longer to be purchaſed at the cheap rate of abſtinence from injury. The courſe of time, and the cauſes we have elſewhere enumerated, had rendered them a thinking people. It was not to be expected that they ſhould acquieſce in a conſtitution which held as an eſtabliſhed and fundamental maxim, that they were not to be truſted.

In this ſtate of the public mind, the plan of political monopoly might certainly have been maintained by the power of Government; but it would have been ſilly obſtinacy to perſiſt, in oppoſition to the feelings and ſentiments of ſo many ſubjects; of whom ſome complained of it as a grievance, and others condemned it as an iniquity. It might have been maintained, but at the expence of covering the land with litigation and diſquietude; of eſtabliſhing an eternal motive of diſlike to the conſtitution, which muſt be vehement in proportion as the nation was proſperous, and which could only be limited or reſtrained by public calamity.

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From the moment that the eſtabliſhment of this people had been permitted, it was plain that they muſt reſent the artificial and unnatural inequality which deprived them of the entire benefit of their ſituation. Men, who enjoying many privileges, were alſo excluded from others, the moſt lucrative and honourable, would, according to the common courſe of human feelings, and the uſual tenor of human actions, endeavour to improve their former acquiſition. Perſons of fortune were not to be reconciled to a ſyſtem, which excluded their relations from liberal purſuits, which, paſſing over their heads, conferred franchiſe upon their domeſtics. It was impoſſible that this great people ſhould not feel; impoſſible that they ſhould not reſent; and as the public intereſt, the cauſe of order and that of good government, could not ſuffer injury by yielding to their requeſt, it would have been groſsly impolitic by a refuſal to alienate their affections. True, they muſt ſubmit, but they would be ſullen! True, they might be coerced! But what was to compenſate the inconvenience and expence of irritating thoſe, whoſe labour was requiſite to ſupport, improve, and advance the public welfare? What was to atone for the toil of watching and guarding againſt the ſallies of a people, intelligent and diſcontented? Was the rental of the kingdom to be taxed, in order to exclude, or to interrupt the progreſs of agriculture and induſtry? The attempt which conſtituted the eſſence of the ſecond ſyſtem of Popery Laws, to combine two things, of all

others

others the moſt irreconcileable, ſubſerviency and opulence, was, indeed, unwiſe and impracticable.

It has often been attributed to the general temper of the age, that this queſtion was critically preſſed at the preſent ſeaſon. The ſtate of Europe, but more particularly the great propenſity, perhaps foible of the Iriſh Proteſtants for agitating political topics with vehemence, may not improbably have contributed to mature the public ſpirit of their Roman Catholic fellow citizens: but the late alteration in the tone and temper of that people is principally to be attributed to the increaſed weight of property, and to the novel circumſtance of a legal and protected eſtabliſhment. They ſubmitted with great reſignation to the ancient diſcipline; to the modern, which was more mild, equal acquieſcence was expected. The calculation would have been juſt, if bodies of men, numerous and eternally varying, acted upon principles, or felt emotions, ſimilar to thoſe of a ſtationary individual. How grateful ſoever for the favour conferred in 1778, theſe might have been, who immediately reaped the fruit of it, a new race was ſpeedily to ſtart up, which having never experienced the hardſhips that were removed, could only be ſenſible of the privations that ſtill ſubſiſted. The Roman Catholics in truth received more applauſe than they deſerved for their former forbearance; under the old ſyſtem, no man of pretenſion from that body could think of ſettling in his native country; the moſt diſtinguiſhed members of it eagerly expatriated themſelves, and enriched

every part of Europe with their talents or their opulence. The murmurs of thoſe whom neceſſity detained were of courſe feeble, and the effect of this helpleſs condition was underſtood to be patience; their timidity was denominated dutiful ſubmiſſion. But when ſo much protection was held out, as induced acute or eminent men to remain at home, they commenced ſpeedily to contraſt their condition with that, not of their fathers, but of their fellow citizens; they diſcerned their own value, and conſidered that they were entitled to much better terms of reſidence.

If the ſituation of an Iriſh Roman Catholic, previous to the laſt act of repeal, be calmly inveſtigated, there will be found in it, indeed, much reaſon for diſſatisfaction. To adhere to the religion in which he was educated was penal, to abandon it was diſgraceful in the eyes of thoſe whom he deſerted, and not honourable in the conſideration of the party which was obliged to receive him. We will not recapitulate the detail of excluſions, often frivolous, always mortifying. Perhaps the indirect effect of his nullity was, to the ſufferer, not leſs painful than the incapacities directly impoſed on him. On political topics a Roman Catholic was ſcarcely ſuppoſed to entertain any opinion, from political meetings and interference he was rigidly excluded. Indeed, common convivial clubs were often formed with an expreſs bye law that no Papiſt ſhould be admiſſible. All theſe mortifications were imputed by the parties to the interdict which forbade them

to

to interfere in public matters; they ſought the privilege of voting for repreſentatives in Parliament, not in order to parade at an election, nor for a reaſon alike frivolous, but not alike innocent, as a portion of the democratic rights of man, but as a poſitive and definable amendment of their condition.

If it were a favourite wiſh to preſerve their aſcendant, as it was termed, the Proteſtants of Ireland were not diſcreet in the uſe of their advantages; the anceſtors of moſt had paſſed over during the age of fanaticiſm, and tranſmitted in their families not a little of Republican inclination. When they reſiſted the ſupremacy of Great Britain, they ought to have diſcerned, that every argument uttered upon that occaſion was yet more appoſite at home; indeed, the caſes were ſo very parallel, that to reſiſt the application were ridiculous inconſiſtency. The frequent recurrence of elections was ſufficient to create a degree of popular ſpirit, which it were idle to think of reſtricting to a particular ſect or party; but the many extraordinary aſſemblies held for political purpoſes were ſtill more calculated to provoke it: the franchiſe of electing was rendered deſirable ſince the octennial exerciſe of it was eſtabliſhed.* The controverſy with Great Britain on the ſubject of ſupreme legiſlative authority, furniſhed argu-

* In Ireland the members of parliament ſat for life until th year 1768, when, under the adminiſtration of Lord Townſhend, was paſſed the celebrated octennial bill.

ments to the Roman Catholic body. The influx of property ſupplied the means of influence and leaders. Claiming freedom from the ſiſter kingdom, Ireland preſented her entire population, but when her demand had been ſatisfied, ſhe refuſed to admit the major part to participate in the benefit. This impoſition could not long continue; neither common ſenſe nor political expedience could juſtify a ſyſtem which at once taught the importance of privileges, partially conferred and partially withheld them. The democratic maſk muſt ſoon fall from oligarchy. Inſtead of crouching as before, under the throne, the ruling party in Ireland came boldly forward, to ſuperintend, to inveſtigate, to cenſure; the Government therefore enjoying no longer that unbounded confidence and implicit acquieſcence, which were the price of partiality, would ceaſe excluſively to patronize a party, and rather find its account in truſting for ſupport to general, than to particular intereſts.

From this ſtatement it may be permitted to conclude, that the plan of excluſions which ſubſiſted after the rights of property had been conceded, was no longer tenable: it was placed on the weakeſt and moſt invidious ground; it was the intereſt of many to attack, and of but few to defend it. The act of repeal recogniſed that the Roman Catholics were neceſſary to the exiſtence of the ſtate; it became after too late to conſider or to repreſent them formidable. Formidable, indeed! To whom? To the connection of the countries? If any contingency could

could have endangered that connection, it ought to have been foreſeen when the ſupremacy of the Britiſh Parliament was annulled. However reprehenſible that ſupremacy, it was a leſſer evil than the excluſion of ſo large a portion of the people from political influence. The natural baſis upon which the unity of the empire ſhould repoſe, and that upon which alone it can repoſe with ſecurity, is formed by the diffuſion of good laws through the entire community; by the reſult of good laws, proſperity and content, which render the great body of the people averſe from commotion; by a common government, common intereſts, and a great intermixture of property. The laws againſt the Roman Catholic people could not be ſerviceable in promoting any one of theſe objects; but, on the contrary, muſt have rather occaſioned a ſpirit of diſcontent, and a propenſity to Revolution, either ſufficient to render the connection and the ſettlement of the country precarious. If an artificial bond of connection were neceſſary, which I do not admit, and that reſtrictions muſt fall for that purpoſe either upon the legiſlature or the people; upon the former the burden would be more light, and the freedom of the latter is more precious; there can be no doubt, which Ireland ought to ſacrifice, and Great Britain would prefer that tie which is at once more eaſily aſcertained, and leſs obnoxious. Far be it from theſe pages to depreciate the independence of my country; when I aſſert that in the ſcale of political advantage, the emancipation of the legiſla-

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ture was ſecond to that of the people, I ſtill leave a very elevated rank to the former. How frivolous, how mean the gaudy vanity which ſhould ſeek to ſhine in robes of ſtate purchaſed at the expence of domeſtic comfort! Such would have been the conduct of Ireland, if it profeſſed to redeem its parliamentary independence by perpetuating the bondage of its people.

In the ſubſequent Eſſays, theſe alarms are, as the nature of the ſubject required, diffuſely inveſtigated: I will not here renew the argument. The ſuppoſed claim to the eſtates forfeited during the civil wars of the laſt century, one objection much inſiſted on is conſidered. (See page 37.) Mr. Jones has taken up that ſubject, and with great ability and hiſtorical information has removed every doubt and refuted every objection. The number of the Catholics has alſo furniſhed matter for much ſpecious reaſoning. In a ſtate of war, or in a ſtate of nature, numbers could not be overlooked; but when we diſcourſe of privileges, which are to be exerciſed, not by the multitude, but by thoſe who have previouſly acquired a certain qualification of property, the account to be taken, is not of heads, but of independent individuals; indeed, not merely of men entitled to exert this franchiſe, but of free agents, who, in the uſe of it, are not obliged to conſult the opinion of a ſuperior. On this calculation, the political influence of the Catholics will be found far inferior, and their majority of population, very much

much outweighed by the dependent ſituation of the greater part of them. The act of 1794 did not ſeparate the balance of power from that of property; it confers privileges which can only be uſed by proprietors, or in ſubordination to that order. Let it be recollected that Roman Catholics are entitled to the advantages of that law, but in proportion as they become opulent; that all the ſources of wealth were already open to them; and that under Lord Hobart's act they are only authoriſed to uſe directly that influence, which the law rendered them competent to acquire, which the neceſſities of the country confirm to them, and of which the indirect and ſurreptitious enjoyment could not by any exertion of authority be prevented. Whilſt a vaſt over-proportion of the national wealth is enjoyed by the one party, and whilſt of the other moſt are indigent, and many engaged in thoſe departments of induſtry to which the rich extend their influence, no coalition, proportionate to their number, can be formed among the latter for remote views, or intereſts of fanciful expectation. Few men will ſacrifice their immediate and cloſe concerns to diſtant hopes and uncertain contingencies.

From the uſual mode of treating this ſubject in England, the Iriſh Catholics ſeem to be conſidered, as formed into clans under certain leaders, and not, which really is the caſe, ſcattered at random over the country, without any peculiar attachment to the men of property of their own communion, and divided by nearly as

many intereſts as there are towns or manors which they inhabit. It is true, a great number of them did unite, in ſoliciting the privilege of voting for repreſentatives in parliament; but more individuals were involved in the favourable deciſion of that queſtion, than any other is likely to affect; and their concern was more immediate and cloſe, than poſſibly can be created by any future controverſy. Such is, indeed, the peculiar ſituation of that people, that every circumſtance is calculated to prevent them from embodying into a political party; they can never be formidable as an hoſtile or a rival ſect. In laws againſt them, there is therefore no additional ſecurity to any object which the ſtate may prize, but only individual inconvenience, and individual ignominy. It is alone by making them feel the weight of civil penalties, or the jealouſy of the Government, that a body ſo diffuſed, ſo diverſified in intereſt, can ever be compreſſed into a political corps, and compelled to united action. Let it be underſtood, that to be a Roman Catholic is an excluſion from any privilege, or any favour; thoſe who experience the inconvenience of ſuch excluſion, will be induced to act together, and if many be aggrieved, they of courſe will form a powerful faction; but all political alliance is diſſolved by not furniſhing this pretext or provocation. Whilſt ſociety exiſts, natural ſtrength will neceſſarily be ſuperceded, and crumbled down by artificial power. The nation muſt lapſe into anarchy before the rude force of an indi-

indigent multitude can produce any effect in politics, and neither in the paſt or future emancipation of the Catholics can be traced a tendency to the diſſolution of ſocial order. If it were poſſible, under any circumſtances, to employ their numbers, the Roman Catholics need not apply to Parliament: the parchment chains of ſtatute regulations would prove, indeed, a feeble barrier againſt them. Away, then, with theſe idle and diſguſting anxieties about chimerical inconveniencies. Every feeling and every intereſt of the Iriſh people accord with the preſent ſettlement of the Empire; and in that temper they muſt continue, unleſs diſtorted from the natural order, by jealouſies without a cauſe, and precautions without an object.

To this general vindication may be objected the frequency of mobbiſh tumults in Ireland, but particularly in the memorable year 1793, the very moment of conceſſion. The hiſtory of the world will inſtruct us, that the moſt beneficial regulations ever made in any ſtate, were, at the time, not felt or underſtood by the perſons, who were the objects of them. The facility, with which theſe riots were ſuppreſſed, denotes ſufficiently that they were not the reſult of any premeditated and concerted ſcheme. A long interval of peace, from the Revolution to the King's acceſſion, had very much increaſed the population of the country: the nature of its commercial and civil inſtitutions neceſſarily excluded trade or capital: there was a redundancy of unemployed hands, whoſe deſperate con-

dition produced unſettled habits and a riotous diſpoſition. The circumſtance was ſeized and exaggerated, and the real cauſe concealed, by individuals in the reſpective counties, who choſe this method of rendering themſelves important, repreſenting to perſons in high ſtation that the peace of the country depended on their exertions.

About the ſame period, and from the ſame cauſe, the demand for land, and of courſe the value of it, increaſed conſiderably. Tracts which had hitherto been neglected, and in commonage, now became important to the proprietors. The people reſented, as an intruſion upon their rights, the attempt to convert theſe into private property. In every country in Europe a ſimilar event has at ſome time occurred, and has been attended by conſequences exactly ſimilar. In the year 1792, a general agitation prevailed in Ireland; ſome pains were taken to *inform* the people; and rumours unaccountably were circulated that it was deſigned to impoſe new and oppreſſive taxes: theſe pre-diſpoſing circumſtances concurring with the formation of the militia, which the ignorant did not underſtand, and which perſons of a ſuperior rank were culpably negligent in not explaining, are ſufficient to account for the more recent diſturbances; but even theſe were exaggerated.

The partial attentions of the ſtate, and the unequal diſtribution of privileges among the ſubjects, proved alike pernicious to the Conſtitution, as to the commerce and induſtry of Ireland. In whatever view we conſider this form of Govern-

ment, it was a nuiſance which every man, from the Prince to the Peaſant, was intereſted in removing. Let me add one remark to the obſervations upon this head, contained in the following eſſays, ſee 49 and the pages following, alſo 189, 200, &c.

An aſſertion has repeatedly been echoed within the walls of Parliament, and circulated unreſervedly without, that in Ireland political men are more eager of emolument, and leſs tenacious of the praiſe of conſiſtency, than in the ſiſter kingdom. The inſinuation is ſaid to have received countenance from various miniſters who have been concerned in the management of Iriſh affairs; and is rendered more credible by the rapid change of opinion upon the Regency, and upon ſome other queſtions.

Where many perſons, deſtined by their rank to lead in public affairs, decline to interfere, political ſituation may ſometimes fall, where the pride of place does not accompany it; but a cauſe may be aſſigned of more extenſive application. With ſuch rigid jealouſy was the excluſion of the Roman Catholics enforced, that to offer an opinion upon political matters, even to applaud or to cenſure, was conſidered an intruſion beyond the limits of their province. The licence of reprehending forms the moſt effectual check upon evil propenſities; but here was not any reſponſibility to a tribunal of public opinion, for the many were rendered incompetent to judge, either of particular meaſures, or of general conduct; and the diſpleaſure of the few, who remained, was not formidable. It

is not improbable that ſeveral Gentlemen might contract a vicious habit of indifference to political reputation, whilſt they were aware, that no account of their actions was to be demanded, not alone by Conſtituents at a future election, but by their friends and acquaintance in private ſociety. This deſcription does not include the northern province, of which the inhabitants, being Proteſtants, were not disfranchiſed; and it is remarkable that the members of Parliament from that diſtrict were more cautious of giving offence, by oppoſing a prevailing ſentiment.*

During the ſpace of fifteen years popular proceedings in Ireland have at leaſt ſix times aſſumed the appearance of imminent rebellion. The deſire of the people repeatedly has been complied with, and yet demand ſeems to have ariſen out of conceſſion. In Great Britain this habit of eternal requiſition has been by many conſidered to ariſe from a reſtleſs turn of mind, a temper light and irritable; or from a ſettled averſion to the form of government, and to the connection of the two countries. I do not think Ireland exempt from blame, but I ſhall endeavour, by the ſame general cauſes, to account for the diſpoſition and for the conduct of that kingdom.

* The Iriſh reformers of Parliament have totally overlooked this circumſtance, and ſtill continue to do ſo, which is the cauſe of many errors of well-intentioned men on the ſubject.

Its character was created by its ſituation. Amidſt ſo many ſuppoſed amendments of the Iriſh conſtitution, the incapacities, of which religion was the pretext, were ſtill ſuffered to continue in force againſt the maſs of the inhabitants. The capital grievance, the cauſe of all others, being untouched, every propoſal for ſettling the kingdom proved abortive; and the repeated kindneſſes of a patriot Prince were uſually fruſtrated, often perverted to a miſchievous tendency. The public expectation was upon each occaſion highly excited; great efforts were not repaid by ſenſible amendments, adequate to the hope and to the exertion. In every conteſt, intemperance appeared to be crowned with ſucceſs, but the victory did not procure ſuch acceſſion to the public welfare, as might induce moderate men to reſiſt a renewal of the experiment. Still an inverted cone ſeemed to repreſent the ſtate of ſociety in Ireland, and every blaſt that aſſailed the edifice, was felt as an hurricane.

That part of the people, who did not think fit to accede to the eſtabliſhment, had learned to diſtinguiſh the conſtitution from the king, to conſider the one a parent and the other an enemy. Their attachment to George the Third was ſtrong, but it was perſonal; to the inexorable ſyſtem of excluſions over which he preſided, they could not poſſibly be cordial. Here was an ample opportunity for innovation; ſo long as the private concerns of the prince were ſpared, an immenſe body of ſubjects,

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placed at too great a diſtance from the ſtate to reſent its quarrels, remained indifferent to the iſſue of every diſcuſſion; and the ſilence of neutrality was conſtrued into approbation. Perhaps, too, they might have viewed with complacency the embarraſſment of an invidious government, although not ſtrictly approving either the mode or the pretence of aſſailing it. The late Oppoſition repeatedly boaſted that its celebrated meaſures of internal reform were ardently deſired by the people; yet theſe were at times diſcuſſed, and finally were paſſed, without producing more ſenſibility, or exciting more attention than an ordinary divorce bill.

Where each man clearly diſcerns his dependence on the ſtate, and his connection with it, the turbulence of an aſpiring individual will from every quarter meet reſiſtance. In Ireland, few were hoſtile to the government, but ſtill fewer imagined themſelves called on to ſtep from private life to the defence of it. The Adminiſtration had ſcarcely a partiſan beyond the limits of its patronage; nay, the calmly reflecting part of mankind, to whom violent proceedings were naturally unacceptable, would heſitate to engage in a cauſe which was only eſpouſed by expectation or intereſt. Hence the vaſt difference between the conduct of the Iriſh Nation, and the pompous diſplay of diſcontent ſo often made in its name by Conventions and other meetings. The nation permitted theſe aſſemblies, but neither reſented their quarrels, when they were treated with diſreſpect, nor offered them ſupport,

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when, as uſually was the caſe, their reſolves and menaces were diſregarded.

During that interval of about fifteen years, to which already I have alluded, the ſpeculators on Iriſh politics roamed eternally from grievance to grievance. The regulations, by which Great Britain reſtricted our commerce, yielded in point of iniquity only to the domeſtic penalties which we inflicted upon our own ſubjects. By the joint effect of both, a conſiderable part of the iſland, without trade or manufacture, was obliged to rely for its ſupport upon the ſingle export of proviſions. Early in the American war, the demand for this commodity was interrupted, and the ſhock (produced by the failure of the accuſtomed reſource) extended to the landed proprietors. The public wretchedneſs was forced into the obſervation of this powerful order, who clearly diſcerned that their intereſt was precarious, unleſs ſome liberal and wiſe proviſion were made to improve the ſtate of Ireland.

But in aſcertaining the principal ſource of national depreſſion, our politicians were not happy. They reſorted to every, but the true cauſe, and ſought every, but the radical remedy. The commercial reſtrictions were removed; theſe conſtituted, indeed, an evil of magnitude, of which the redreſs was highly beneficial. But until the twin miſchief were rooted out, even that relief was ineffectual. It was expected that our happy ſoil and commercial opportunities ſhould attract ſtrangers, who, pouring a ſudden influx of capital, ſhould rapidly

pidly enrich the kingdom. Foreigners wiſely judged that the ſettlement of a country could not be ſecure, in which population was at variance with authority. Although very conſiderable encouragement * was propoſed, not even the Jews would accept the invitation. We quarrelled with the law of Poynings, but the law of Poynings had never made a pauper; the abrogation of it added not new comforts to the condition of any individual. The wretched habitations of the poor were not rendered more commodious by reſtoring the dernier reſort to the Iriſh Peerage. The controverſy of ſimple repeal or renunciation, by which the kingdom was ſeverely agitated, neither attracted commerce to our ports, nor increaſed the demand for labour in favour of the Peaſantry. To have aſſerted the legiſlative independence of Ireland, and induced Great Britain to recogniſe it, reſembles in theory and in declamation, the exploits of Harmogenes and Ariſtogiton. It was really and in practice a transfer of power from the Britiſh to the Iriſh Legiſlature; of which bodies the latter had not much more political connection with the ſubjects handed over, than the former who ſurrendered

* A few years ſince there was a treaty on foot with Mr. Claviere (the late Republican miniſter of the Convention) to lead into Ireland a number of men who had emigrated from Geneva, as too ariſtocratic. Nothing can better illuſtrate the deluſion of the rulers of Ireland upon this ſubject, than the idea of correcting their own Roman Catholic royaliſts, by the mixture of a clan of Republicans, too refractory for Geneva.

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them.* The Parliament was not in conſequence of this tranſaction more intimately blended with the Nation; or any improvement made in the connection, which might be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt between them. *Sanctius animal deerat adhuc.* Public ſpirit, and firmneſs, and dignity were yet to be ſupplied to Ireland, for ſhe wanted a people.

I mention theſe meaſures with leſs enthuſiaſm than is uſual; with leſs than I ſhould have ſpoken of them myſelf; before I came to appreciate their value by their effects, and to perceive the great unimportance of them to the major part of the nation. But as being rendered complete by the emancipation of the people, as conducing indirectly to that event, and as now forming a principal part of a good conſtitutional ſyſtem, they are at preſent entitled to the rank of beneficial regulations: that may be applied to them, which Sir John Davis very appoſitely remarked of a former unſucceſsful attempt to reform the government of Ireland—"Theſe good laws and proviſions were like "leſſons ſet to a lute that is broken and out of "tune, of which leſſons little uſe can be made, "until the lute be made fit to be played on." We muſt extend the ſame obſervation to the introduc-

* It is probable that in the two Britiſh houſes there is as much Iriſh property, as is poſſeſſed by the attending members of the Iriſh legiſlature. In that caſe, the Roman Catholic people of Ireland, whilſt excluded from ſuffrage, had nearly as complete a virtual repreſentation in the Britiſh, as in the Iriſh Parliament.

tion of octennial elections, to the retrenchment of the privileges of parliament, to the independence of the judges, the Habeas Corpus, the limitations on places and penſions, and the reſponſibility of public officers. Of theſe inſtitutions, each is intrinſically good, ſome of the higheſt utility, and all muſt contribute to render the reign which produced them, a memorable epoch in the annals of Ireland. But whilſt the Government continued at variance with its ſubjects, they were imperfect; and whilſt a plan of policy was perſiſted in, harſh, unfriendly, and diſguſting to the multitude, they muſt have failed in the deſign of conciliating the eſteem and affections of the people.*

Let me be permitted in a moment of exultation to continue the metaphor of that able and honeſt ſtateſman. The ſhattered and neglected inſtru-

* I ſhall defer to the more extenſive publication, of which the deſign is announced, page xv. to offer the hiſtory of theſe meaſures; but I cannot avoid a remark here; Ireland preſents an eminent inſtance of abuſes in legiſlation and manners, corrected by the gentle hand of time, and the gradual, but certain operation of circumſtances, in contraſt to the ravages of haſty and impetuous revolution. The repreſentatives of the people, in the commencement of the preſent reign, approached nearer to the character of an ariſtocratic corporation than the peerage at this moment. Here is a moſt radical and ſalutary reform produced by the ſilent, almoſt the unobſerved ſucceſſion of events and circumſtances, which the gentlemen who labour in the cauſe of democracy have never deemed worthy of their attention.

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ment is now repaired, and henceforward we may expect from it only ſounds of melody and concord. I am aware that political prophecy ſhould be cautiouſly hazarded. Predictions of the ſame import, and on the ſame ſubject, have failed, although aſſerted with confidence, and founded on calculations apparently very accurate. But the connection eſtabliſhed between the nation and the government, by the late change made in the conſtitution of Ireland, and in the principles upon which the public affairs in that country are adminiſtered, open a more fair proſpect than could have been reaſonably indulged at any former period of our hiſtory. Malignant ſtateſmen may again ariſe, and miſchievous machinations may again be concerted; but the opportunity of carrying pernicious projects into effect is abridged, and even if the facility ſubſiſted, two hundred years of blaſted hopes and retarded ſettlement are placed before the eyes of the preſent and of future ages. The awful example will prove, it is preſumed, inſtructive, and the courſe of human happineſs be leſs liable than hitherto it has been to the interruption of experiment.

I muſt admit, that the politics of Ireland have preſented for ſome time a more ruffled ſurface than thoſe of Great Britain; but I deny the concluſion often drawn, that there exiſts in the former country a morbid deſire of novelty, or a diſinclination to that ſyſtem of connection which ſupports the greatneſs of the Britiſh empire. Until the principles of

the monarchy were reduced to order, and rendered congenial to the national temper by the revolution of 1688, England was afflicted with the ills of a weak government, and a reſtleſs people; what that Revolution was to England, the reign of George the Third, but in a particular manner the ſeſſion of 1793, has been to Ireland.

At a period not more than thirty years diſtant, it was part of the ſtated buſineſs of the Iriſh Parliament to vote away the public money in jobs; this was denominated the *ſcrambling committee.*

Sir James Caldwell has publiſhed two volumes of the debates of the firſt ſeſſion of the preſent reign. A ſpeech of a member is there recorded, who gave as the reaſon for voting a certain ſum on his motion, "that he thought himſelf equally entitled as "any other gentleman to get his job carried."*

The acknowledged privileges of Parliament protected from arreſt the perſons and properties of the members, and likewiſe of all thoſe, to whom they were pleaſed to grant the title of their domeſtics; by the aſſerted privileges, the Houſe aſſumed an inquiſitorial juriſdiction over every criticiſm in the public or private conduct of its members; the following inſtance will ſerve as a ſpecimen of the uſe made of that authority.

In the ſame publication we find a printer called before the Houſe and committed to priſon, for having inſerted in his paper that a gentleman, whoſe name is mentioned, really was not the author of the North Britain; implying thereby in the judge-

ment of the houſe a ſarcaſm on the literary talents of that Gentleman. It is mentioned in the courſe of the debate (which was long and ſerious) that Mr. Falkener had been committed ſome years before, for publiſhing a witty epigram of Dean Swift upon a member of Parliament.

Theſe abuſes have been corrected without a ſingle effort of violence; the Habeas Corpus and the long catalogue of good laws, which in this diſſertation I have enumerated repeatedly, have been obtained without violence; and yet there are men in that country who never ſeemed to doubt their own good ſenſe, when they exhorted the nation to arm in order to adjuſt ſome intricate points relative to the repreſentation of the people in Parliament.

A reaſonable motive of diſcontent exiſted, the cauſe was generally diffuſed, and the effect of conſequence univerſal. This has now been corrected. It is then no fanciful hypotheſis, nor is it any peculiar compliment to the nation to ſuppoſe, that habits of quiet, induſtry, and content, will enſue from the amendment. Let me not incur the cenſure of wandering into extraneous matter, when I ſeek to ſtrengthen my aſſertion by a ſlight review of the ſtate of Ireland prior to that period of which we have treated in the former part of this diſſertation. The true cauſes of the decay of that kingdom may be more diſtinctly aſcertained, when it ſhall appear that the ancient, although different in name and pretext, correſponded in principle with the more modern

modern policy; and that of both the reſult was ſimilar; a diſtracted ſtate; the people neceſſitous and turbulent.

In the conflict of bold marauders againſt weak and diſunited tribes, and in the ſavage acts of mutual aggreſſion and retaliation, which compoſe the early hiſtory of the Engliſh ſettlement in Ireland, there is little to reward reſearch, or to ſtimulate curioſity. As it approaches to the preſent century, the narrative becomes more diſguſting, a tedious repetition of cenſure, a nauſeous detail of oppreſſion and rapacity. But from annals, even of a very early date, the politician who ſpeculates on the affairs of Ireland may derive inſtruction. There has been greater uniformity of deſign and coincidence of practice in this than in any other government; events caſt at a diſtance of time from the age in which we live, have not ceaſed to influence, and ſtill may ſerve to explain many facts, and to reconcile many apparent inconſiſtencies.

The firſt invaders were not, like other barbarous conquerors, accompanied by a ſufficient number of followers to overrun the iſland; they formed only partial eſtabliſhments along the coaſt, and their monarch was himſelf content with an haſty and nominal recognition of his ſupremacy. From this band of military adventurers, we are not to look for a liberal plan of policy; for beneficent inſtitutions, the correction of preſent evil, and foundation of future happineſs. To deſolate, not to improve, was their province; they did not attempt to introduce

duce the laws or cuſtoms of England among their ſubjects. Unaccommodating and repulſive in their conduct, they denied to the Iriſh even the protection of their government, and appeared upon all occaſions diſpoſed to treat them as open enemies. By maintaining an eternal bordering war, the chiefs of the colony were better enabled to ſupport their dignity, and to juſtify incroachments which extended the limits of their territory.

Ireland, at the time of this invaſion, was in the tranſition from paſtoral manners to ſettled property; a condition which at ſome period every nation has paſſed through. Society had not as yet attained the ſame degree of perfection, as in England at the Norman conqueſt; for this latter had long enjoyed the advantage of an uniform government under a ſingle ſovereign. But the uſages of the Iriſh were not more vicious than thoſe of other infant nations, and if ſuffered to purify themſelves according to the accuſtomed courſe of civilization, by the growth of neceſſities, and admixture of ſofter manners, would have ſubſided into the ſame form of regularity which took place in the adjacent kingdoms. In what relates to the ancient condition of the Iriſh, it is uſual to follow the writers under Henry the Eighth, and Elizabeth, who contraſt them with the Engliſh of their own time; not adverting that for the ſpace of four centuries, every thing had conſpired to deprave the one, and to correct the other people. There is every evidence that the Iriſh were not, in the time of Henry the Second, far behind their neighbours in the tendency

dency towards refinement. In that age, the difference between nations could ſcarcely have been more than gradations of barbariſm.

A multitude of petty juriſdictions, often hoſtile, always independent, divided the iſland. This aggregation of rivals muſt of neceſſity be turbulent; it would ſeem a circumſtance favourable to the eſtabliſhment of order, that all ſhould have agreed to recognize a paramount, ſuperior beyond diſpute in power and in dignity. This previous Revolution being accompliſhed, it would have proved afterwards (whether the Engliſh or the Iriſh cuſtoms had been followed) a work of little difficulty to reduce the Chieftains to the rank of eminent ſubjects.

But foreign wars or domeſtic diſſenſions diverted the attention of the Engliſh court. Until the reign of Henry the Seventh, the dominion of Ireland was a title of vanity rather than an object of political regulation. During this interval, living in perpetual alarm, the Iriſh were forced into a ſtate of ſociety, probably more barbarous than had been known at any former period. Every diſtrict was afflicted with exactions and violence, and all the multifarious ills of military tyranny. Under a diſcipline ſo relaxed, even the Engliſh colony degenerated. The ancient race of inhabitants, compelled to ſeek an aſylum in places of difficult acceſs, acquired a deſperate ferocity, the uſual attribute of the outlaw character, which was impoſed upon them. Thus an event which might ſeem calculated

culated to have produced the happineſs of that country, was converted into a ſource of miſchief and depravity.

Unleſs when provoked by ſome emergency, the interference of the ſupreme government in the affairs of Ireland was ever languid, its inſpection negligent. The vigilance of Henry the Seventh was excited by the reception given to the claimants, who interrupted the tranquillity of his reign, and who derived conſiderable ſupport from Ireland. Under that prince, ſome attempts were made to reduce the authority of the great lords, and to diſentangle the government; but unleſs backed by a ſtrong military force, ſtatutes and denunciations were inadequate to effect the purpoſe, and as yet the ſettlement and ſecurity of Ireland were not conſidered of ſufficient importance to call forth great exertions.

During the civil wars of York and Lancaſter, the relative ſtrength of the original Iriſh was augmented; a part of the Anglo-Hibernian families, eſpouſing either title, were occupied and exhauſted; others profited of the weakneſs of the government to abjure their native uſages, and aſſume the ſtile of independent chieftains. The flame was ſmothered until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but then blazed forth in a formidable inſurrection, protected by the Pope and King of Spain, the uſual enemies of that princeſs.

Apprehenſions were now ſeriouſly entertained that Ireland ſhould either be formed into an inde-

pendent ſtate, or paſs under the Spaniſh dominion. The exigency called for a force much greater and better appointed than had hitherto been appropriated to this ſervice. In quelling this revolt, the reduction of the iſland was at length completed.

Under theſe circumſtances, James the Firſt ſucceeded to the government; and with great appearance of probability the writers of that age foretold the approach of a golden age of peace and proſperity. Theſe hopes were fruſtrated by the fanatical enterpriſe of compelling the acceptance of the reformed doctrines, and of forcibly expelling the only religion which was known to the people, or with which they had any means of being acquainted. By degrees the policy of rooting out the Roman Catholics ſucceeded to that of exterminating the ancient Iriſh.

The mode of introducing the reformation into Ireland was ſo obnoxious, that even if miracles witneſſed and warranted its veracity, popular aſſent muſt have been reluctant. A ſimple people adhered with zeal to the rites which they had been taught to practiſe, and with tenderneſs to the paſtors whom they had been accuſtomed to revere. No circumſtance called for a change of religious inſtitutions in the country; and to an unneceſſary undertaking was added the manner of the attempt, calculated to revolt every feeling and every prejudice; men were puniſhed before it was attempted to perſuade them. On the point of the ſword opinions were propounded by rulers of unamiable and unconciliatory

ciliatory conduct, whom the anxiety to aggrandize themſelves or their followers often betrayed into acts of unjuſtifiable ſeverity. The eſtates of the original Iriſh, and of the early Engliſh ſettlers, were ſo repeatedly ſought by thoſe who condemned their religion, that the ſupport of both was inſenſibly blended, and the cauſe of the Church of Rome became that of the liberty and property of Ireland. Lord Strafford, *patriæ et Trojæ communis Erynnis*, contributed not a little to eſtabliſh this ſentiment; it appeared in force in the great civil war of 1641; at the revolution it provided an army for King James; for the partiality of the Iriſh to that prince was not, as many have imagined, blind devotion to an injudicious monarch. They conſidered, that the general welfare of their country was likely to be promoted by his reſtoration. The recent ſettlers, or Proteſtants, whoſe tenures appeared ſomewhat precarious, conſulted their ſecurity by maintaining in its moſt rigid ſenſe the ſuperiority of England. The ancient inhabitants, or Roman Catholics were, under this ſyſtem, excluded from the truſts, emoluments, and dignities of public ſituation; they were diſturbed in their properties, and moleſted in their religion. They ſought to relieve themſelves from that inconvenience, by altering the terms of connection between the kingdoms. The poſterity of the adverſe party have imitated them in that ſpeculation, and inſiſted upon the eſtabliſhment of an independent legiſlature, as a meaſure eſſential to the honour and happineſs of Ireland.

Thus two factions, two countries we may be allowed to call them, were formed within the iſland, adverſe in public and in private intereſts. Each, judging the antagoniſt by his own maxims and feelings, became accuſtomed to repreſent him ungracious and unamiable; but I do not undertake the hiſtory of theſe ſuppreſſed factions; I endeavour merely to explain ſo much of the former ſtate of Ireland, as may appear to have had ſome influence in forming its modern condition. A conſiderable part of the oppoſition to the late emancipation * of the Roman Catholics, proceeded from theſe original impreſſions. A tradition had been handed down in many families that Popery was a natural enemy. Adhering to this primitive aſſociation of ideas, ſeduced by prepoſſeſſions ſo inveterate, the enemies of the meaſure were unable to perceive that the period was arrived for correcting the principles of their government. The attachments were diſſolved, and the relations altered, which had heretofore diſcriminated the reſpective parties. By their own hands the buttreſs was levelled, which ſupported their dominion. No longer was the aid of England to be invoked; the ſiſter nation would not peculiarly countenance a

* I uſe this familiar word, *emancipation*, to avoid a paraphraſe, although I do not conſider it as perfectly applicable. It ſeems to imply, that the Roman Catholics of Ireland were raiſed from a condition more abject than really they had been placed in. It equally implies that the account is cloſed between that people and the ſtate, which I do not conceive to be the general ſentiment.

party

party, which had proved indocile to her ſway; or employ her power in the protection of domeſtic arrangements, from which ſhe had ceaſed to derive emolument. The enfranchiſement of the Roman Catholics was not originally preſented to the public mind, under an intemperate form. Yet it was received, as would have been the denunciation of a ſervile war, or the inſolent claim of menials to ſhare the diſtinction of their maſters. If I were much influenced by perſonal conſiderations, I might pauſe with complacency on a controverſy, in which ſome notice was allotted to me. The general good requires that it ſhould be forgotten. The following volume will teſtify the principles of one, who in the introduction of the buſineſs was not conſidered uſeleſs or inactive, and who in the proſecution of it, expended ſome time and labour, and incurred ſome obloquy. Time has avenged him of adverſaries, who are no longer recollected. Their cenſure of the individual is eaſily pardoned. Oppoſition to the meaſure, as a public queſtion, admits of much extenuation.

No candid man, converſant in the habits of thinking, which were familiar to the Iriſh Proteſtants, could have reaſonably expected that this propoſal ſhould have been adopted with the facility of a ſelf-evident propoſition. It was neceſſary by argument to clear the ground; by conciliation to divert private prejudice; by patient perſeverance to ſubdue refractory intereſt. In theſe were eminently deficient the perſons from among the Catholics, who undertook the conduct of the buſineſs (about the

month

month of May, 1792) at the very moment when ſuch qualities would have been moſt ſeaſonable. If it were in contemplation to plant eternal diſcord in Ireland, the favorers of the deſign would have purſued nearly the ſame conduct that was obſerved on this occaſion. To one party an object was preſented ſo very deſirable, that they were likely to overlook inferior conſiderations in the proſecution of it. The other was not elated by the ſame enthuſiaſtic fervor; the members of it fixed their attention on the means, and perceived them to be irritating and offenſive. The breach was thus rendered every day more wide; and the difference was made more venemous and irreconcileable by introducing perſonal aſperities againſt individuals, who diſſented. Let me not be underſtood to apologize for theſe gentlemen, who, often in a manner highly unjuſtifiable, oppoſed themſelves to the Roman Catholic pretenſion. But I would have treated them more mildly, becauſe, after all, when the queſtion was to be carried, we muſt aſſume our reſpective ſtations in the ſame country; and the ſucceſs of the cauſe, which was inevitable, was ſufficient both as to revenge or vindication. The moment was pregnant with circumſtances favourable and recommendatory: theſe were abandoned, and ſuch a cauſe made to depend on precarious contingencies.

The Adminiſtration had the good ſenſe to rid the country of the diſcuſſion in the ſecond year of it. They made a ſacrifice of that part of the objectionable

tionable ſtatutes, which affected the nation, and which was felt by the Catholics as the moſt univerſal, and afflicting inconvenience. But that people forfeited, by injudicious management, all the advantage which might have accrued to their cauſe, from addreſs and negociation. Of the high ground upon which they were placed they loſt as much, and profited as little, as the nature of the caſe permitted: and the kingdom, of which they form a conſiderable portion, ſuſtained eſſential injury. If, which many believe, by re-iterated and ſupernumerary appeals to the people, the principles of ſubordination have been unſettled, and wretches prompted, (indirectly, without doubt, and I candidly believe, unintentionally,) to draw down upon their heads miſery or death, and awful animadverſion of juſtice. If an alarm, the effect of theſe proceedings, has interrupted the confidence upon which public credit depends, and driven multitudes of manufacturers from employment, before the calamity of war could have affected them. If great public ſpirit and exertion have been unneceſſarily called forth, improvidently adminiſtered, and profuſely ſquandered; if privileges, which might have been obtained with good will, by ſuffering the firſt ferment to ſubſide, and then ſubſtituting conciliation for aſperity, are to be incumbered with the hatred and envy of thoſe with whom we ſhare them, then have theſe franchiſes been ranſomed upon extravagant conditions. It is an unthrifty bargain which pays fifty years purchaſe for perhaps twenty-

four months of accelerated enjoyment. I ſhould have ſcarcely thought theſe incidents worthy to be recollected, were it not that they furniſh an inſtructive leſſon to a people, which is ſtill likely to be poſtulant. In the northern province of Ireland, the enfranchiſement of the Catholics was conſidered at leiſure, and there the affirmative opinion obtained the greateſt number of proſelytes. In that diſtrict, the competition of the ſects had long ceaſed, for the ſuperiority of the reformed party was deciſive; there, of courſe, natural juſtice had ample room to operate. Let us remark for the honour of the eſtabliſhed hierarchy, the reſerve of that body on a ſubject which might be ſuppoſed calculated to inflame its paſſions. Some were diſtinguiſhed among the favorers of the Roman Catholic emancipation; few ranged themſelves with its active opponents.

Theſe miſcellaneous or deſultory obſervations have extended beyond my original project of a mere introduction. There appears much inclination to report and credit the marvellous on the ſubject of Iriſh politics; to ſwell accidental riot into the manifeſtation of real grievance, or the evidence of inveterate diſaffection, as it ſuits the temper of thoſe who treat the ſubject. I have attempted to deliver, what I conceive to be more accurate information, by referring events to the true, that is, to accidental cauſes. A noble writer aſſerted, in a work publiſhed a few years ago, that during the American war, ſums of French money had been diſtributed in Ireland, and repreſented this as a

cauſe

cauſe of popular murmurs, which then prevailed in that country. A very ſerious charge! of which the proofs were, I apprehend, only known to the author; for where the tranſaction was ſuppoſed to have paſſed, it has not left either a trace or a ſuſpicion. I truſt that, without reſorting to bribery, the exiſtence of motives, adequate to produce popular diſcontent in Ireland, is rendered manifeſt.

In an hiſtory of the laſt twenty months, lately publiſhed, a few curſory remarks on the affairs of Ireland are careleſsly interſperſed. To deliver jejune and frivolous obſervations, may be the misfortune of a writer; but this maſs of diſingenuous malignity * is calculated to miſlead, to repreſent faction

* This writer aſſerts, as a cauſe of oppoſition to the pretenſion of the Roman Catholics, that three Iriſh families form a coalition, and "enjoy emoluments to the amount of 150,000l. "per annum," (page 149.) In the firſt place, between the three names he has cited, there is no more coalition than between any other three members of Parliament, who think proper to vote in general with the preſent Adminiſtration; and ſecondly, no ſuch emolument is poſſeſſed by them. Accuracy might be expected in an *hiſtorian*, when his materials are not more recondite than the court calendar.

In each of two of theſe "families," there is one office, with its uſual perquiſites. In the third, a noble family of the firſt rank and reſpectability, of which the younger branches have applied themſelves to public affairs, there are three or four. The accuſation is then reduced to a charge, that there are officers of ſtate in Ireland.

faction innocent, and public management reprehenſible. The moſt laudable acts of the Iriſh Government

It cannot appear very extraordinary, that an ancient and opulent family, of conſiderable perſonal and parliamentary influence, ſhould participate in the favour and confidence of his Majeſty. Theſe are terms by which the people of Ireland would, I believe, readily conſent to recall their eminent non-reſidents. The noble chief of the name we allude to, ſpends a very large fortune in his country, with aſſiduous and honourable attention to the encouragement of every uſeful art and practice. The department of revenue miniſter, which is filled by his brother, is the ſituation of moſt laborious duty in the Iriſh Adminiſtration. This calumny firſt appeared in the form of an anonymous hand bill, diſtributed in order to excite the lower order to inſurrection. It is not wonderful that a falſe report ſhould ariſe in that ſhape, and be converted to that purpoſe; but ſtrange, indeed, that a perſon with pretenſions to be believed, ſhould deſcend to write his name upon the dagger of a ruffian.

In the parallel which he attempts between Mr. Burke and himſelf, I ſhall not follow Mr. Plowden, becauſe the contraſt may probably not occur to any ſecond perſon. Neither do I interfere to defend that eminent man againſt his nauſeous illiberality; in the conteſt with Priam, it is unneceſſary to offer a ſhield to Achilles. In one circumſtance only, the mere ſtatement of a fact with which I am converſant, I ſhall take the liberty to correct him.

The appointment of Mr. Burke, jun. to negociate in England for the Iriſh Catholics, was not an artful precaution, as it is repreſented by Mr. Plowden, to ſecure the countenance of his father, and to exempt that cauſe from "his general ban "and anathema againſt innovators." Mr. Burke was employed before the gentlemen who ſolicited him to act, intended to apply for the privilege of ſuffrage. Certainly this propoſal

vernment are either totally ſuppreſſed, or touched with haſte and inaccuracy; and thoſe circumſtances forced into notice, of which it is poſſible to attempt an unfair ſtatement, or from which an unkind inference may be extorted. Conceſſions, well timed, and firmneſs well directed, diſtinguiſhed the Iriſh Adminiſtration at that critical ſeaſon. I ſpeak of the general government of the country, not of the extra-miniſterial proceedings of gentlemen who hold high offices, ſome of whom I cannot equally applaud, becauſe I do not concur with them. The Iriſh nation has

having been made by Mr. Burke, jun. to the Miniſter, and having been received in England as a project not unreaſonable, was a very principal cauſe of the confident perſeverance of the Catholics; it encouraged the moſt timid of that body to entertain hopes of ſucceſs, and to encounter the domeſtic oppoſition that was expected to the meaſure.

If the nomination of that gentleman was affected by any conſideration, other than the opinion, that in his hands the buſineſs would have been managed with ability; it was the grateful ſenſe of his father's attention to their welfare, which had long been experienced by the Catholics of Ireland. For above thirty years that gentleman had been their ſtrenuous and diſintereſted advocate and protector. He was the firſt perſon who attempted to oppoſe the current of public illiberality, and from the rich mine of his political pieces have been ſupplied the greater part of the arguments which were employed in the late diſcuſſion. He was deſervedly conſidered by that people the father of the Catholic emancipation. Mr. Burke's ſentiments on this ſubject were declared in his ſpeech at Briſtol; they were expreſſed more fully above ten years ſince in a letter to Lord Kenmare, publiſhed about that time.

has no reaſon to cenſure the cabinet, from whence iſſued reſtrictions on the prerogatives of the crown; limitations on the expenditure of public money;* a new and beneficial arrangement in the finances; the admiſſion of the entire people to nearly all the advantages of the conſtitution, which had been withheld from them; and the maintenance of order in a criſis of peculiar delicacy.

The act to prevent Conventions is repreſented by the writer before me, as the outrageous expedient of an unaccommodating government to cruſh the expreſſion of well-founded murmurs. Whether originally juſtifiable or otherwiſe, every diſpaſſionate man in the nation muſt allow that theſe aſſemblies had now fallen into abuſe. There appeared a manifeſt deſign to render ſuch meetings habitual; and they were likely to become the engine of every petty demagogue, and the reſource of every petty diſſatisfaction. Indeed, the Convention which was held at Dungannon in 1793, appears to have been already of this deſcription. The real grievance of Ireland is the want of ſufficient occupation for her hands; the cauſe

Mr. Burke's "ban and anathema againſt innovators and reformers," never extended to any innovation, but thoſe, which, ſhaking the ſecurity of government and property, were dangerous to human happineſs, he could not be imagined hoſtile to the extenſion of the Britiſh Conſtitution to his Majeſty's Roman Catholic ſubjects.

* Theſe two meaſures had been introduced in former ſeſſions by Mr. Forbes, member for Drogheda; they were adopted with ſome improvement by the miniſter.

of

of that inconvenience is her want of capital. It was clearly the intereſt of the kingdom to invite confidence, by preſenting to the world a government, ſtrong, as well by the correction of abuſes, as by vigour and vigilance in preventing intemperance. If theſe ſchools of diſaffection were to be ſuppreſſed, it was more merciful to denounce to the unwary the ſenſe of the legiſlature, and to reclaim them, than to permit the evi and puniſh it.

But is the avenue of Parliament cloſed to the ſubject by this law? No. The right of petitioning is regulated and re-enacted. It is ſtrictly forbidden to convene as delegates, becauſe the Parliament is ſuppoſed to poſſeſs that character, and becauſe that mode of collecting the public ſentiment has no advantage to counterbalance the miſchief of inflaming the nation, and diverting the people from their neceſſary occupations which were known to have ariſen from it. The Iriſh Convention bill reſembles that act of Charles the Second, which prohibits more than a certain number to preſent a petition to Parliament. That law has never interrupted the exerciſe of the ſubject's right to approach the legiſlature. The privilege of petitioning is rather ſecured by it than interrupted. By the political hurricance which Ireland felt in the year 1792, the lower order of the people was vehemently agitated; from the month of May, in that year, to the enſuing January, there were ſome injudicious proceedings of Roman Catholics in Dublin;* there were many, by the partiſans of re-

* I allude to the Gentlemen who were called the ſub-committee of the Catholics.

form;

form; and one very general, and by no means the leaſt inflammatory, adopted by the greater part of the Grand Juries throughout the kingdom. By all theſe provocations, a conſiderable degree of ferment had been excited through the nation; and it extended to a peaſantry, whoſe ſituation already too much prepared it to be unquiet. There were perſons in the kingdom who miſtook for patriotiſm their reluctance to obey, or their expectations of acquiring weight from democratic innovation. The good to be derived to the lower claſs from the conceſſion of the legiſlature was remote, and eluded their ſagacity; the incitements to outrage were urgent and immediate. It would not have been difficult to have miſled the people, ere yet they had been rendered ſenſible of their improved condition. If, becauſe ſome Conventions had acquired celebrity, corporations of licenſed conſpiracy had been permitted to form under the ſame appellation; and if, by the protection of an applauded name (that of the volunteers) arms had been ſuffered to fall into the hands of men, without reſtraint or ſelection, theſe perſons muſt afterwards inevitably have governed the country; the Conventional Aſſemblies would have preſented a rallying point; the armed bodies would have proved the inſtruments of the diſaffected. By the Convention bill, the former danger was prevented: the latter attempt was wiſely and fortunately defeated by the judicious interference of the executive power. Without theſe laudable and well-timed exertions, Ireland

was

was loſt to the crown, or at leaſt to peace, to induſtry, and to private happineſs.*

* I have omitted to detail the proofs of inſidious deſign in the gentlemen who were active in promoting the laſt Convention held at Dungannon, and which they appeared deſirous to propagate through the nation, by means of ſimilar meetings, becauſe this duty has been very ably and faithfully diſcharged by a ſenſible and honeſt man, who was a member of the Aſſembly, and witneſs to their proceedings. *See Letters to the Inhabitants of the Town and Lordſhip of Newry, by Joſeph Pollock, Eſq.*

THE

THE

CONSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS

OF

IRELAND,

With Reſpect to the

ROMAN CATHOLICS,

Originally publiſhed at Dublin, Jan. 1791.

INTRODUCTION.

THE laws, which puniſh non-conformity to the eſtabliſhed religion, have frequently, in England, been the topic of free diſcuſſion; the ſpirit and tendency of theſe reſtrictions have been expoſed without reſerve, and the conduct of thoſe who maintained them, arraigned with ſeverity. The controul aſſumed over conſcience was felt and repreſented, as arrogant and intruſive, by the Proteſtant Diſſenters; a deſcription of reſolute and high-ſpirited men, jealous of their own rights, and uſually not indifferent to the rights of others. In the arguments of theſe learned and diſcerning perſons, (for ſuch is the character of the Preſbyterian advocates) the evidence of truth and juſtice appeared irreſiſtible; yet the conviction which they ſucceſsfully laboured to impreſs, was not deſigned for univerſal benefit; it was a barrier erected to protect particular deſcriptions of citizens from the intemperance of proſperous bigotry, but not ſufficient to repel every encroachment of falſe zeal, infringing on natural right under pretence of religion. Much in the ground-work was done for the general cauſe of liberty. In this ſchool were firſt promulgated the ſacred doctrines of man's native dignity and freedom. Here firſt were the juſt powers of ſociety defined, and a ſtandard eſtabliſhed, to aſcertain by what ſacrifice its advantages ſhould be purchaſed. The pre-

rogatives of conſcience were aſſerted, and the exerciſe of private judgement vindicated againſt the interference of human tribunals. But having exculpated themſelves from the imputation of tenets, which might ſubject them to the juriſdiction of the magiſtrate, theſe writers ſometimes inſinuated, that with regard to other denominations, the apprehenſion was not equally groundleſs: that there did exiſt opinions unlike what they profeſſed, reprehenſible and dangerous—

Quæ ſibi quiſque timebat,
Unius in miſeri exitium converſa tulere.

It is the object of this eſſay to inveſtigate the caſe of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, againſt whom ſuch accuſations have been chiefly directed: hitherto partly from the timidity of theſe injured religioniſts, partly from the antipathy entertained againſt them, their grievances have ſeldom been ſtrongly and fully ſtated, and not often conſidered with the calmneſs which the nature of the ſubject merits. It has been made rather the ſupplication of indigent calamity, than a ſolemn ſtate queſtion of expedience and juſtice, and addreſſed not to the good ſenſe, but to the commiſeration of Proteſtants. I wiſh to call the national mind to this inveſtigation, as to a public concern of the moſt ſerious nature, and infinitely more eſſential to the ſcheme of Iriſh conſtitution, than even the favourite meaſures of reform and reſponſibility. We live in an age in which ſuch diſcuſſion may be looked for; it is an age of benevolent attention to the oppreſſed; an age of vigorous enterprize and hardy ſpeculation. The particular circumſtances of Ireland call at this moment for the inquiry: complaints are loudly uttered, both in and out of Parliament, that the executive power is not ſufficiently controuled, and that the popular branch of the

the conſtitution has not its due influence; it may prove intereſting to conſider whether theſe, and other evils of magnitude cannot be redreſſed, by the emancipation of the Catholics; it may not be found ſuperfluous to examine whether the equipoiſe, eſſential to a free ſtate, can be preſerved, or whether any limitations upon the executive power can be relied on, whilſt three fourths of the nation are obliged to regard themſelves dependent on that power, and to adopt ſentiments which are only to be reconciled with a ſtate of abject deſpotiſm; "that they are at the mercy of the crown, and "muſt comply with the caprices of its officers." Vaſſals without political pride, political importance, or political intereſt.

No nation can have an intereſt diſtinct from that of three fourths of its inhabitants. If it is inexpedient that the Iriſh Catholics ſhould be free, the Proteſtants ought, in juſtice and common ſenſe, to abandon the purſuit of liberty. If reſtrictions on the monarch are not for the greateſt good of the greateſt number, our monarchy ſhould be changed from limited to abſolute, and the operations of government no longer impeded to convenience a minority of the nation. Lectures on freedom are delivered in Parliament, repeated from the preſs, and re-echoed at every local meeting; is it to be preſumed that theſe circumſtances ſhall make no impreſſion on the Catholics? When we are taught the neceſſity of a popular controul over power. When we are told, that miniſters do not merit confidence, that their practice and principles uſually are vicious, we ſhould, indeed, labour under more than Beotian dullneſs, if we did not deſire to poſſeſs the privilege of political interference, of which the uſefulneſs is recommended by the firſt talents in the land, and of which, to thoſe who enjoy it, the value ſeems ineſtimable. The rights of man, the rights of the people, are the themes of every

public and private ſociety. Shall we not be induced to inquire, what there is more than man in a Proteſtant, or leſs in a Roman Catholic, which ſhould degrade the one from his natural level, and in the ſame proportion elevate the other? The pre-eminence conceded to wealth and ſtation is ſalutary; that enjoyed by merit natural; the reſpect paid to birth an allowable prejudice, ariſing out of both; but no apology of expedience or juſtice can be offered for the diſtribution of mankind into caſts by their religious tenets, and the ſubſequent ſelection of a choſen people. The preference is not the reward of ſuperior virtue; the virtues of every ſect are ſimilar, and by all, like principles of morality are inculcated. It is not calculated to promote ſcience, to encourage induſtry, or animate honour: we have proofs in Ireland, that religious diſſenſion, fomented by authority, conſtitutes an almoſt inſuperable obſtacle to improvement.

The circumſtances of France are often alledged in argument to ſilence the call for political alteration. The cataſtrophe of the Gallic deſpotiſm might certainly furniſh an uſeful leſſon to perſons in authority. It might teach them, that how ſpecioufly ſoever eſtabliſhed, that cannot be ſecure, which has injuſtice for its baſis. It might inculcate the propriety of reviſing a ſyſtem of government, whilſt yet reviſion may be calmly managed; and of accommodating laws to the temper of thoſe whoſe obedience muſt give them efficacy. It might ſhew that a government of force cannot be relied on; that government muſt ſomewhere reſt upon opinion, either of thoſe who enforce, or thoſe who obey it: the latter is more conducive to the eaſe and happineſs, both of ſubjects and rulers. The entire fabric of French politics was built on a few private views, and unſtable prejudices; as the nation learned to think, the former were diſſipated; the latter, as it became animated with the enthuſiaſm

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of public virtue. A few men capable of ſetting the example of either, are ſufficient to operate on the public mind this material alteration. I do not ſee that any country ought to ſlight admonition; I do not ſee that it is culpable to offer it: until the enemy was at the walls of Rome, Vitellius refuſed to credit the intelligence of his approach; he continued inattentive to the laſt, and became the victim of his obſtinacy.

But unleſs we will force the compariſon upon ourſelves, there is no analogy between the ſituation of France, and that of Ireland. When France awoke from her lethargy of implicit obedience, ſhe found ſcattered around but the veſtiges of freedom, indiſtinct, and converted for the moſt part into abuſes. A few indefinite privileges, haſtily ſnatched in times of feudal barbariſm, not adapted to the manners of the preſent age; not compatible with the degree of information that ſubſiſts in it. The æra of Gallic torpor was a buſy ſcene in England; during that entire period the ſpirit of the nation was alive, and ſeconded by ſtateſmen of no ordinary ability. Oppreſſive inſtitutions were reſcinded or corrected. We have in Ireland the model of an excellent conſtitution; the ſcale is, indeed, contracted; it ſhould be rendered capacious of every citizen. But when the democratic organ ſhall have been repaired, the intereſt of the ſelfiſh ſubdued, and the illuſions of the prejudiced diſſipated, we ſhall poſſeſs that conſtitution which antiquity applauded, and to the excellence of which every eminent modern has borne teſtimony. No inference can hold from the ſtate of France to that of Ireland; if the former was neceſſitated to take its government to pieces, and ſtill feels the convulſions inſeparable from that awful expedient, it cannot be argued, that the legiſlature of another nation ought not to entertain the

complaints of its ſubjects, inveſtigate at leiſure the nature of their grievance, and apply without commotion the neceſſary remedy. It is abſurd to ſuppoſe that of all human inſtitutions, government alone is not ſuſceptible of improvement; no, the prudent politician, whilſt he dreads the hand which tears, ſhuns not that which rectifies: he does not preſume that, in the imbecility entailed on our imperfect nature, there is an exception in favour of the maxims by which ſtates are regulated; conſcious of this truth, and earneſt to avert the evils inſeparable from a government which does not correſpond with its real object, and communicate happineſs to the people, he will accommodate his policy to the temper of the times, and not cruſh the ſubject under the weight of inſtitutions which have ſurvived their meaning. I do not think that a reaſonable juſtification could have ever been alledged for this ſyſtem, but at this day every reflecting perſon muſt allow, that it admits of no apology. There is no pretender to the crown, whoſe hopes the Roman Catholics might be ſuppoſed to favour. There is not any foreign ſtate with whom they might be ſuſpected to connect themſelves. The only impediments are to be found in the perſonal intereſts of thoſe, who have collected to themſelves the few advantages, attainable by Ireland in its preſent ſtate of political debility. Theſe perſons are aware that a national coalition muſt prove fatal to their monopoly: they know that the free intercourſe of the people is prevented by the reſtrictions impoſed on the one part, and the jealouſies entertained by the other. To perpetuate the diſunion, Proteſtant aſcendency, a viſionary unmeaning apprehenſion is preſented to the Proteſtants; for the Diſſenters, who know too well the Proteſtant ſtrength of Ireland to be deceived by a groundleſs

groundleſs ſurmiſe of danger, and who are too ſhrewd to graſp at a ſhadow of dominion, and abandon the ſubſtance of public welfare, they have invented another cant more ſpecious, but not leſs ſilly, of the incapacity for freedom.

I never heard of any more unphiloſophic jargon than this of incapacity for freedom; and yet ſome very ſenſible men have been deceived by it. Is there any thing ſo complicated in the regulation of our cloſeſt concerns, that we ſhould require, with all this parade, to be initiated in the myſtery? Muſt a man have the qualifications of a miniſter of ſtate, in order to divine what gentleman in his neighbourhood is likely in parliament to oppoſe unneceſſary reſtrictions upon private life, or unneceſſary taxes upon private property? The elective franchiſe ſhould be as little circumſcribed as poſſible. It is the great ſecurity of a nation that the number of perſons engaged in the defence of liberty, oppoſe inſuperable difficulties to the labour of debauching them. This is not the caſe in Ireland; the number of electors are to the maſs of inhabitants comparatively few, and men of fortune, by an inconſiderable expence, can buy the indigent Proteſtants, or create ſo many occaſional freeholders as will procure a majority. Our government is therefore not ſo pure as it might be rendered, and this depravity is upheld by the combination of bigotry and ſelfiſhneſs, of which Ireland has made an apotheoſis, and worſhips by the appellation of Proteſtant Aſcendency.

This iſland has received from nature every capability of improvement that has been conferred upon Great Britain; why are we not equally forward in commerce, ſcience, civilization, in manufactures and agriculture? Becauſe principles of rational policy are purſued in England; becauſe the Britiſh are an united, and the Iriſh a diſtracted nation. The Iriſh Proteſtants hold to government

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that relation which the Janiſſaries do to the Turkiſh, and which the Pretorian Guard did to the Roman, Emperor; a garriſon ſtationed to awe a dependent people, and poſſeſſing excluſively the favour of government. The Proteſtant aſcendency, in the ſenſe it now ſeems to be received in this country, is an eternal ſentence of baſtardy and degradation: a bar in the eſcutcheon of Ireland, that limits, to her more fortunate ſiſter, the inheritance of their common parent.*

When the wiſhes of the people of Ireland are oppoſed on any great deſign of national advantage, we uſually accuſe ſome refinement in the cabinet of England. That great nation is ſuppoſed to depend on ſtratagem, for its connection with a country, inclined to proceed to infatuation in its affectionate attachment to Great Britain. It will not be neceſſary to inſiſt on the profligacy of that baſe artifice—"*divide and govern.*" Surely thoſe who endeavour to practiſe it, are injudicious in the choice both of the nation, and the particular inſtances for which they ſelect it. Remove the cauſe of complaint, the effects of conſequence muſt ceaſe: the intereſt of the ſiſter kingdoms, and the influence of connection and property, mutually intermingled, will ſufficiently provide for the ſecurity of the Empire. A proſperous people will never involve itſelf, in the calamities of civil war, merely to indulge ambition, or contend for a phantom of pre-eminence. But let the managers for Engliſh influence beware how they multiply the cauſes of diſcontent, and inducements to innovation. If every ſubdiviſion of Iriſhmen be angered and diſcontented; if the Proteſtant complain, that his

* Much is ſaid in this country of capacity for freedom: but, in fact, thoſe alone are unfit to enjoy liberty, who deſire to pervert the uſe of it.

privileges

privileges, are invaded; the Roman Catholic that he is defrauded of the common benefits of ſociety. I dare not dwell on the proſpect, it is neither cheering nor conſolatory to the friends of Ireland, and of the empire. I diſcern little in this celebrated maxim, beſides the obligation impoſed on thoſe who practiſe it, to obſerve a more vigilant policy and more minute attentions. There is another, not ſo much uſed by politicians, but more valuable than volumes of their myſtery. "Do to "others as you would willingly be done by." If, by the aid of this holy precept, the artifice of courts was reduced to common ſenſe, and common honeſty, the lot of human nature would become more enviable, and the condition of thoſe who govern more tranquil.

Although I ſhould not prove ſucceſsful, it will at leaſt be ſatisfactory, to have removed the queſtion from the looſe invective in which it has hitherto been involved, into a form of more correct and rational deliberation. The object of my eſſay can ſcarcely be cenſured; it is calculated to diſſipate the antipathies, and compoſe the diſſenſions which for two centuries have rendered Ireland proverbially the land of faction. With the zeal which ſhould animate a patriot, but preſerving the reſpect to which eſtabliſhed uſage is entitled. Firm, yet, I truſt, not intemperate in my expoſtulation, I remonſtrate againſt that part of our domeſtic policy which has been frequently pronounced erroneous, and by means of which the natural advantages of our ſituation are ſaid to be fruſtrated. I proceed ſtill farther to arraign the artifices of deſigning men who uphold this ſyſtem, and the deluſion of falſe reaſoners who acquieſce in it, as forming impediments to the permanent and peaceful ſettlement of our conſtitution. The argument will probably be conducted

with temper; it is advanced by one, who takes very little concern in the pre-eminence of any ſect, but who wiſhes to ſee the juriſdiction of power limited to its proper objects, and whoſe feelings are warm in the cauſe of juſtice and his country. Fortunate country, if mutually forgetting the animoſities to which diſtempered times gave origin, every order of citizens were alike occupied in promoting the public welfare, and alike invited to participate in the public happineſs.

CONSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS

OF

IRELAND.

CHAP. I.

Of the general rules, which ſhould guide a Legiſlature in impoſing penalties, and the application of theſe rules to the Iriſh Popery Laws.

THE Legiſlature in the Britiſh conſtitution is uſually pronounced omnipotent. We know not, it is true, of a tribunal paramount to parliament, and competent in the firſt inſtance to reviſe or to annul its ordinances. But ſtill there lies an appeal to public opinion. This cenſorial right, by which the people is authorized to inſpect, and to pronounce on, political tranſactions, diſtinguiſhes free from deſpotic governments. The inſtitutions of the Britiſh nations have been peculiarly provident to maintain it. The legiſlator is bound in every inſtance to exerciſe his truſt with a view to preſerve the harmony of the ſtate, and to promote the happineſs of the individuals who compoſe it. He is reſponſible with his reputation for the exact performance of this duty.

Where, as in this caſe of the Iriſh popery laws, a ſacrifice is exacted of rights eſſential to man's well being, and the penalties impoſed wreſt from him the very firſt advantages he could have hoped to procure by political aſſociation, it becomes a duty more indiſpenſable, that perſons in authority ſhall juſtify their conduct. There ſurely exiſts no internal and deciſive evidence, that for having been educated in the Roman Catholic faith, a man neceſſarily becomes unworthy of the confidence of ſociety, and ought to be excluded from its advantages. Convincing reaſons ſhould indeed be offered, to account for what otherwiſe ſeems paradoxical; that, in a free ſtate, there is ſuffered to ariſe a great landed, and a great monied intereſt, not connected with the conſtitution, not participating in the bleſſings of liberty, not by any means concerned to preſerve them. I cannot admit as ſufficient what ſometimes is alledged, that good order is preſerved by maintaining a ſubordination of religious parties. No religious opinions, nor the conſequences of any religious opinions, are as likely to prove ſubverſive of good order as are breach of faith, ſeduction and adultery; crimes againſt which, it would ſeem without detriment to the ſtate, there is not denounced a ſimilar ſentence of excluſion.

It cannot be denied that the popery laws are ſome kind of national injury, and a very ſevere hardſhip on the individual ſufferers. A queſtion then ariſes, are theſe evils compenſated by any counterbalance of advantage? In my opinion they are not; and I ſhall endeavour by an impartial ſtatement of their ſuppoſed advantage sand certain inconveniencies to ſupport this ſentiment. It will, I hope, not be denied that Roman Catholics, like other men, are governed by their paſſions, and their intereſts, and that in the purſuit of either, they do not, after the manner of wild beaſts, ruſh upon their prey to the riſk of deſtruction, but are guided like all rational beings,

beings, by rules of common ſenſe and of expediency.

If nothing can be oppoſed, but that ſtale repetition of invective and prejudice, of childiſh ſurmiſe, and viſionary apprehenſion, which conſtitutes in general the accuſation againſt Roman Catholics, my argument will ſtrongly plead for the reverſal of the attainder under which they ſuffer; and with the more force, as we live in a ſtate of ſociety in which government ought not, as in the Turkiſh Empire, to be reduced to the deſpotic expedient of ſecuring on ſuſpicion. Indeed the precautions taken to ſecure the ſtate againſt the Catholics, are meaſures to ſecure it againſt itſelf; for if that rational, and equal liberty, which the Britiſh conſtitution promiſes, was communicated to every ſubject, what intereſt could perſons of this religion have, different from other men, whoſe property is within the realm, whoſe families are eſtabliſhed in it, and who muſt therefore aſſociate their private concerns with the welfare of their country?

CHAP. II.

Of the hardſhips inflicted on the Roman Catholics by the Popery Laws.

THE definition is not too extenſive, which deſcribes the diſqualifications impoſed in Ireland on Roman Catholics, as amounting to an utter excluſion from all that can cheriſh the fine emotions, or gratify the laudable ambition of the noble mind; from whatever imparts its energy to courage: to genius ſtrength and animation. They conſtitute an ordinance of ſtate, forbidding two thirds of the Iriſh people to conſider themſelves men of principle, or freemen.

Through the entire ſyſtem theſe characteriſtics are predominant, power and confidence are rigidly withheld, and a line drawn between the objects of coercion, and all other members of the community; the moſt profligate of the reformed ſects is preſumed more truſt-worthy, than any however reputable of the unfavoured religion; and the latter are, upon all occaſions expoſed to the contumely of this mortifying ſuppoſition.

Thus, by withholding from them the elective franchiſe, they are pronounced unfit to act as truſtees for their own, and for their country's liberty, and deprived of repreſentation, that eſſence and firſt principle of a free conſtitution.

They are precluded from the hope of advancement through the medium of the active profeſſions; and from the emolument which leſs ambitious induſtry might obtain in the diſtribution of public employments.

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They are ſtigmatized as ſuſpicious perſons, to whom the prudence of the legiſlature is obliged to deny the ordinary protection of defending themſelves by military weapons.

The midnight robber, if reſiſted, is enabled to exchange his character by day, and to expoſe his victim to a legalized injury; a peaceable citizen may be puniſhed for having in his poſſeſſion thoſe arms by which his life was protected.

Let it not be ſaid that this penalty is rarely inflicted; the cant of the preſent day is liberality of ſentiment and conduct; as twenty years back it was the dangers of popery, and the neceſſity of preventing the growth of it; poſſibly the caprice of twenty years hence may reſtore the original order of precaution and jealouſy.

Neither does it afford much conſolation, that a diſpenſing power is conferred on government; the ſufferers have good ground to complain, that a raſh and unneceſſary mark of opprobium is ſet upon their body: that the relief to individuals is rendered precarious by the forms of application, and burdenſome by the perquiſites of office. The nation at large will ſeriouſly conſider, whether, as with the riſing proſperity of Ireland, the property of Roman Catholics becomes extenſive, ſo dangerous an engine of influence ſhould be entruſted to the executive government.

Every citizen, according to the nature of his qualifications and merit, has pretenſions to ſhare in the rotation of public offices. We contribute with more cheerfulneſs our quota to the public exigencies, when we recollect that, from this fund, perhaps a ſon, or brother, abſolutely does at preſent, or is likely at ſome future day to derive, the means of honorable ſubſiſtence; and thus in the emolument of cloſe connexions, the burden of taxes is alleviated. From this conſolation, faint and frivolous indeed, the Roman Catholic, by the ſpecial interference

ference of the legiſlature is precluded. An act of rigour the more unwarrantable, as the Sovereign alone is the diſpenſer of public bounty; and there is no great reaſon to apprehend, that without the admonition of an Act of Parliament, he would not in caſe of danger, provide with ſufficient vigilance for his own ſecurity.

The prohibition to embark in the moſt enviable profeſſions, challenges its place in this inveſtigation. To a Roman Catholic of ordinary means, unleſs he will conſent to a waſteful partition of his property, inſtead of a ſource of pride and conſolation, his children are a burden. Cloſed to this order of citizens are the avenues which lead from the middle to the ſuperior ranks of life, the faſcinating career of intellect and genius.—In the various walks of traffic, to which this people are limited, it is idle, nay dangerous, to engage without a natural bias, or habits ſtrongly impreſſed by education. Let but the accident of birth or early prejudice fix, in the Romiſh faith, a mind naturally intelligent and active; the vigour which might have ſignalized itſelf in the field, the fertile ſoil in which imagination had luxuriantly ſprouted, and good ſenſe been cultivated with advantage, produces but an outlaw, a vagabond, or bankrupt. Of the ill policy of refuſing in the military departments the ſervices of our Roman Catholic countrymen, the brave men who diſtinguiſh themſelves in every part of Europe, have frequently been cited in evidence. A domeſtic leſſon, ſtill recent, might have inſtructed the Iriſh nation, that the precaution was uſeleſs if not imprudent. When every gale was expected to waft invaſion to the coaſt; and in the general depreſſion of the empire, the people of Ireland, addreſſing themſelves, like the antient Britons to their accuſtomed protectors, were rebuffed like that people, with a tale of miſcarriage, a picture of diſtreſs, and a confeſſion of inability; in that day of con-

fuſion, this boaſted wiſdom of paſt times, and theſe precious inſtitutions, the reſult of it, were alike forgotten. There was no inclination, no leiſure to conſult a catechiſm, a martyrology, or a legend, in order to decide what meaſure of confidence might be repoſed in men, when their deareſt intereſts are in jeopardy. But recollecting for once the natural force of the ſtate, theſe inſulted and injured Papiſts were called to defend a country in which they were not cheriſhed. The Roman Catholics, without heſitation or reluctance, came forward. To their decided interpoſition Ireland, nay the Britiſh empire, was, at that day of terror, indebted for its preſervation. Diſappointed in the expectation of internal ſuccour, France abandoned, as hopeleſs, a project, which had for a long time been deſigned, and for which meaſures had, with no little prudence, been concerted. But mark in the ſequel the retribution made to theſe excellent citizens. Happy had that peril proved for Ireland, if the hurricane, which ſwept the vermin of peeviſh apprehenſions from the land, had terminated their exiſtence. They returned as the horizon grew ſerene, to indulge in the ſunſhine, and mar the proſpects of our tranquillity. Popery again became formidable. When their ſervices ceaſed to be neceſſary, there was leiſure to doubt the good intentions of the Roman Catholics. The arms entruſted to them were in general recalled, and themſelves diſcarded from moſt volunteer corps in that part of the country, which had immediately witneſſed their exertions.* In the only inſtance, when they might have betrayed their country, they were truſted; they were careſſed, and confided in at a time, when, if ill diſpoſed to the ſtate, their treachery might have produced ſerious miſchief. In the face of that very

* This happened at Cork, June, 1779.

enemy, whom their prepoſſeſſions were ſuppoſed to favour, they were embodied; at this day their moſt ſanguine exertions to injure the civil or eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment could not ſucceed, and they now are treated with diffidence and contumely. Whence this whimſical overflow of confidence, this unnatural return of ſuſpicion? Let thoſe reconcile the apparent inconſiſtency, to whom the bondage of their equals ſeems of little moment, and who attempt to juſtify it by ſome plea of wiſdom, or appeal to expediency. I cannot grant, that men ever do become ſo negligent of their concerns, as to tempt an enemy amongſt them, merely becauſe he coincides with them in ſome articles of creed and diſcipline; but completely to refute thoſe who aſſert, that their country cannot depend on the Roman Catholics, let us judge the cauſe on its own internal evidence. If their miſplaced affections have deviated from what duty dictates, they muſt ſurely have ſome object. France and Spain are the only powers to whom they might reaſonably attach themſelves. That they were not attached to either, is ſufficiently evinced by the circumſtance already cited. If theſe courts had adherents in the country, a ſecret intelligence muſt have been eſtabliſhed, and never could a more favourable opportunity occur to profit of our diviſions, than when the perſons on whoſe diſpoſitions they could rely, were abſolutely prepared with arms to receive them. No ſuch inclination, no ſuch intelligence at the time were even hinted at; it was ſuppoſed, and the ſuppoſition proceeded no further, that the poor, becauſe they are deſperate, would become outrageous. Why then was the old ſyſtem of rigorous coercion revived againſt men who, in the ſeaſon of danger and trial, had given a teſt ſo unequivocal of their fidelity? To me there ſeems more of principle in the brutality of fifty years back; however erroneous the judgement of thoſe who at that day

haraſſed the Roman Catholics; however cenſurable their demeanour, it was conſiſtent throughout. On every rumour of invaſion, the members of this obnoxious ſect were treated with rigour, and their places of worſhip levelled; but even in that conduct there was ſomewhat more than, a wiſh to exerciſe dominion, and as a pretext to preſerve it, an affectation of terror, which was proved hypocritical, and a groundleſs impoſition by the perilous ſituation, that diſplayed the genuine ſentiments of every individual. After the manner in which we have borne theſe two extremes of peace and danger, no comment is wanting to explain the motives. There are certainly well-meaning perſons deluded by falſe apprehenſions relative to property, and the eſtabliſhment. On each of theſe topics I hope to be able to give ſatisfaction. Too many are led away by the incenſe their vanity receives in the conſciouſneſs that they mix with men, whoſe influence on the ſtate is to their own comparatively diminutive, whom they are authorized to treat with the arrogance of protection, and from whom they may receive the homage of dependence.

The right of being repreſented in parliament is not, as ſome perſons weakly or wickedly inſinuate, a bawble that attracts ſeptennial reſpect, and ſoothes the ſhort-lived vanity of the proprietor. The elective franchiſe is the ſoul of freedom; the vital principle, which circulates through the body politic, a ſtream diffuſing animation, nouriſhment, and vigour; where it exiſts not, the *people* is an inert maſs; where the ſalutary current does not reach, morbid excreſcence or gangrene. However remote his influence on the ſtate machine, the conſciouſneſs that he poſſeſſes ſome influence, gives to each proud aſſociate in the general privilege, that ſenſe of dignity and independence which ennobles the meaneſt

of a free people. I need not dwell on the importance of this ſentiment in elevating the public mind, and forming a national character; the leſſon was taught in America, it was taught at Marſton Moor and Edgehill; but even on common intereſts and occurrences, the right of ſuffrage has its operation. Upon this, as upon a ground work, are erected the ſyſtems of reſponſibility and controul, theſe maſſy pillars in the fabric of the conſtitution. By this are men at the helm of government kept ſteady to the object of their truſt, and compelled on all occaſions to conſult the happineſs, and ſeek the approbation of the ſubject. Parliamentary influence, in its varied degrees, is the chain which links the moſt eminent with the lower orders, and the recommendation to numberleſs kind offices, which many ſtand in need of. The gentleman by his weight at the county election ſecures to himſelf an importance far from deſpicable in the conſideration of rural politics. To the citizen or yeoman it obtains the kindneſs of many, the marked protection of ſome one among his powerful neighbours: thus conſtituting, but revocable at pleaſure, a ſort of feudal intercourſe, promoted and kept alive by a reciprocity of kindneſs and advantage. I appeal to thoſe whom it is moſt material to convince, the repreſentatives of the people; will any one among them deny, that pending his pretenſions to repreſent any great city or county, he is not obliged, whatever may be his feelings, to extend protection to the worſt and meaneſt of thoſe who can ſerve him, rather than to a Roman Catholic, no matter how meritorious, but from whom no ſuch aid can be expected?

Without the elective franchiſe there is no ſecurity that government may not at any time alleviate the burdens of the ſtate, by a partial tax on Popiſh property; this ſpecies of outrage is not without a precedent; in the aſſeſſment of ſome county taxes

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it is well known to have been already practiſed. The Roman Catholics poſſeſs not that controul over the diſpoſal or impoſition of public money, which is given to property in every ſtate pretending to freedom; for the diſtribution of equal juſtice they are ſimply to depend on common honeſty, a virtue of caſual and uncertain operation, and which is not always to be relied on as overpowering the dictates of a man's private intereſt; in all this I can diſcern nothing to diſcriminate their ſituation from that of the ſubjects of any arbitrary monarch. There are, indeed, no ſtatutes to inflict fine or corporal puniſhment at diſcretion; they have that benefit of the common law to which any ſtranger viſiting the country is equally entitled, and from which, if ſhipwrecked on a foreign coaſt, they would not by the ſpecial interference of a legiſlature be precluded.

An argument will here be offered which often has been advanced in that long ſeaſon of miſrule and criminal ill policy, which preceded the firſt alleviation of theſe grievances; that the Roman Catholics poſſeſs civil liberty, the diſtinction between that and political power will delicately be laid down, and we ſhall hear it aſſerted, that whilſt the one is not invaded, the other, a vain pageant, may be wanted without detriment. That is, if they have reaſon to believe that without ſome alledged cauſe, they ſhall not be ſpoiled or impriſoned; if there exiſt no particular uſage of ſending a Papiſt to the baſtinado or the galleys, they may truſt to the virtue, or rather to the convenience of others, that this CUSTOM of forbearance will not be violated. It has ever been held to be a cruel oppreſſion that thoſe who govern, ſeparate their intereſt from thoſe who ſubmit. Is it in this caſe not to be conſidered an hardſhip? Is no attention to be paid to that experience and that maxim which pronounces the vain hope that civil rights ſhall be held ſecure, unleſs the enjoy-

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ment be guaranteed by a reaſonable proportion of political liberty? Without that, we hold our freedom but by connivance. He who adviſes that the deareſt concerns of his fellow citizens ſhould lie at the mercy of the magiſtrate, or the multitude, reaſons inaccurately on human nature, and propoſes that rule for others to which he would not readily ſubmit his own intereſts. Would any man conſent to hold by the permiſſion of a miniſter, his property, or his life, his claim to a trial by jury, or to the benefit of the habeas corpus act? Surely not; the confidence that theſe bleſſings are placed beyond the reach of power and incroachment of prerogative, gives to the Britiſh conſtitution that ſuperior excellence which Europe envies. To preſerve inviolate this bleſſing has been the motive to every conflict which the Britiſh people engaged in. The Roman Catholics poſſeſs at this inſtant no controul whatever over the impoſition of taxes, and can ſcarcely enſure to themſelves common reſpect, from the mean perſons to whom the loweſt departments of power are intruſted; what then do we gain by the buſtle and cumberſome forms of a free government? a precarious exemption from injury, to be continued during the caprice of the many, and the convenience of the few, and held at beſt by no more ſecure tenure than a fluctuating faſhion of liberality. Equal, and probably more durable advantages are to be had in any civilized monarchy. We hear at every inſtant that power is a truſt delegated to ſome, for the benefit of the whole; that government, and more eſpecially the form we live under, is not a conſpiracy to promote the emolument of a part, but a rational and extenſive ſyſtem of happineſs to all its members; and who are you, who intrude between my intereſts and me, and aver that you are better qualified than myſelf to defend my happineſs? No; if we are to ſerve, let our vaſſalage be qualified by the dignity of thoſe who are

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to command us; let it be to an illuſtrious monarch; let not one fourth of the nation claim it as a privilege of their faith to be our taſk-maſters. The cup of ſlavery, ever a bitter draught, is rendered more intolerable by the clumſy inſolence of thoſe who adminiſter it. Thus ſhould the Iriſh Catholics reaſon; but they ſhould not content themſelves with reaſoning. There are breaches in the conſtitution acceſſible to a monied intereſt; in theſe ſhould they faſten, on theſe intrench, and then tell their grievances with temperate, but unaccommodating fortitude. The leſſon of liberality could not fail to prove inſtructive, if read to the miniſter by a few complying friends in parliament.

I ſhall in a proper place touch on the evil conſequences of withholding from men the benefit of their good conduct, external reputation. It enters into this part of my eſſay, only to remark the ſevere tyranny which purſues a man to the judgement ſeat of his own heart, and there compels his feelings to execute the ſentence of degradation. Pre-eminence never occaſions diſguſt unleſs when the diſtinction is made between perſons mixing in the ſame ſociety, and otherwiſe upon terms nearly equal. It never was the haughty demeanor of a Soubiſe or Montmorenci, that, exaſperating the people of France produced the preſent revolution. No; it was the beggar Count, and half-naked Chevalier, it was the arrogance of the *petite nobleſſe*, diſperſed through country towns and ſubordinate departments, claiming ſuperior title to royal favour and patronage. Certainly, moſt of the praiſe beſtowed on the French men of figure and landed fortune, is well founded; but in the defence of that nobility, no account is taken of thoſe who having no other claim to rank, but that derived from the vain diſtinction of title, never omitted an occaſion to reproach with their accidental precedence, men who equalled or exceeded them in merit or fortune;

fortune; nearly ſimilar is the ſituation of Ireland. The body of Proteſtants is ſufficiently numerous to aſſume an aſcendant, not enough ſo to cut off competition. We have ſeen the fate of the noble oligarchy of France; it is not in the nature of things that the Proteſtant democratic oligarchy of Ireland can have a very long duration.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Reaſons upon which the Popery Laws are vindicated.

OF thoſe who have treated this ſubject, to ſome, the original deſign of the Popery Laws appears prudential; in a country, they alledge, agitated by contending factions, a ſettlement could only be effected by ſtrong exertions of authority; to ſuch perſons it might be replied, that this great end would have been more eaſily accompliſhed by modes of conciliation, than of rigour; that the ſyſtem favours of partiality, rather than precaution; that the project of beſtowing on one part of the community a monopoly of truſts, privileges, and emoluments, could never be juſt in any nation, or politic in a free one. But as moſt of theſe writers cenſure the continuance of burdenſome and uſeleſs reſtrictions, which have obviouſly ſurvived their meaning, I ſhall on this head abſtain from controverſy. It is of little moment to the point now in diſcuſſion, whether the acts were the reſult of wiſdom, or of outrage; calmly digeſted in the cabinet, or imagined in the wantonneſs of civil victory. "I "come to bury Cæſar, not to praiſe him." Let it apologize for the authors of the penal ſtatutes againſt Papiſts, that they legiſlated according to the temper of the age they lived in. The code they have bequeathed to us, is not ſo much calculated to defame their memories, as to illuſtrate, by an additional example, the general imperfection of our nature, unhappily too eager

to graſp at power, and ſeldom very temperate in the uſe of it.

——— "Proud man,
"Clad in a little brief authority,
"Plays ſuch fantaſtic tricks."

On the moſt favourable conſtruction, the perſons who framed this ſyſtem muſt have only deſigned it a temporary expedient, until a more perfect arrangement could be eſtabliſhed; and if I were ſimply to bind myſelf by theſe limits, and to ſhew that in the preſent ſtate of Ireland, the Popery Laws are uſeleſs, every purpoſe of my argument would be anſwered.

I paſs by as ſuperficial invective, upon which no man of ſenſe, experience, or information can reaſon, the charges of criminal principle and conduct which mutually have been alledged and retorted; no religion ever ſanctioned that which the law of nature reprobates; nay, more, never did bonds of vice hold together any numerous ſociety. One cannot ſit down to juſtify what every ſoldier has done, or every pedant written. In the tumult of the reformation, as in all great conflicts, of which the point at iſſue is important, enormities were certainly perpetrated. If an alteration of dreſs, language, or juriſprudence, had been compelled by authority, parties of ſimilar animoſity would moſt probably have been generated. The contention would have been managed with equal vehemence, and accompanied with inſtances of violence no leſs atrocious; but he cannot be ſerious, or if ſerious, he cannot be honeſt, who ſeeks for precedents of miſgovernment in the annals of barbarous times, and cites authorities which, upon no other occaſion, would be entertained for a moment, in order to glean together the ſcattered inſtances of miſconduct; and on the acts of ferocious ages to ground a charge againſt the poliſhed inhabitants

bitants of modern Europe. Perſecution, the coarſe expedient of an arrogant, unfeeling mind, which cuts the knot it ſhould unravel, is not in any inſtance to be juſtified; but if a plea of extenuation may be offered, it comes, without doubt, on the ſide of the Roman Catholics. They maintained a ſyſtem which had interwoven itſelf with their laws and prejudices; nay, with their very notions of the Divine Being, which had been delivered as venerable by their parents and inſtructors, and authenticated as they thought by tradition, and preſcription immemorial. The doctrines too of the reformers attacked the temporal intereſts, and thus exaſperated the feelings of many princes. If the courteſy of modern philoſophy offers in excuſe for the good Trajan, and benevolent Pliny, that the one enjoining, the other executing rigid methods of coercion againſt the firſt Chriſtians, were miſled by ignorance of what they puniſhed, and by falſe ideas of obedience and piety; that they ſuppoſed the doctrines of this people interfered with their allegiance, and ſaw in their practice a ſupercilious contumely for the religion of their fathers; how is it poſſible to refuſe a like apology, and for ſimilar motives, to the ſovereigns of the dark ages, unacquainted, like Trajan, with the tendency of the propoſed innovations, but not like that Emperor, wiſe and enlightened? We pity the error and ignorance of our anceſtors; we regret that literature had not ſoftened their manners, ſubdued their fierce paſſions, and enlarged their ſphere of intellect. But on him only can I look with amazement, who, at this day, will continue to propoſe barbarians for a model, and rely upon ſuch precedents to countenance a dominion, inconſiſtent with every law of juſtice, and every principle of liberty. If the old church of Rome was that deluded and ſanguinary monſter her adverſaries repreſent her, were they bound to recede only from her errors in ſpeculation?

Were her errors in practice to be conſecrated in the new ſyſtem of church eſtabliſhment, or treaſured in a ſafe repoſitory to ſerve upon occaſion the Proteſtant government of Ireland?

There are other arguments more ſpeciouſly urged, or at leaſt which ſeem to have left more impreſſion on the public mind, and on which I ſhall therefore beſtow a cloſer criticiſm. It is alledged that there is ſome lurking principle of evil either in the doctrines or diſcipline of the church of Rome, which tend to diminiſh a man's attachment to our free conſtitution, and to eſtrange his affections from the reigning family. That there are dormant claims of Roman Catholics, which they are likely to produce, if they acquire weight ſufficient to make the demand with confidence; and which, if produced, muſt make the country a ſcene of wild confuſion. Laſtly, that as a dangerous rival to the eſtabliſhment, it is not ſafe to countenance the church of Rome, but ſage to depreſs it by every means within the limits of common humanity. I conceive theſe objections are ſtated as ſtrongly as they ever have been put. In giving the firſt, it was impoſſible to avoid the contradiction which it obviouſly contains. If the Roman Catholics were charged with a diſpoſition to republicaniſm, it might account for their ſuppoſed antipathy to the prince; or, if deemed extravagantly attached to the blood royal, we might conſider the charge of indifference to liberty as not utterly chimerical; but that they ſhould at once fall out with the two contending members of the ſtate, the monarchical and demoeratic parts of it. If their preſumed diſlike is never to be called into action, it is, I ſuppoſe, not worth commenting on. If it is to appear on the ſtage of politics, the ſpoil, which ever way won, muſt be given to enrich an enemy; either the powers of the crown muſt be contracted in favour of popular liberty, or the rights of the people beaten down

down to ſwell the triumph, and improve the property of this hated prerogative. If ſuch be the policy of Papiſts, feeble, unoperative, and ineffectual, truſt them, in the name of heaven, with all the powers they demand: he is a ſhallow politician to whom their machinations can be ever formidable.

Whilſt there exiſted a pretender to the crown, whoſe claim the Roman Catholics might be ſuppoſed to patronize, this abſurdity was ſomewhat leſs paradoxical; but that pretext of ſuſpicion is now removed, the romances of ſlander, with which the preſent age have been infeſted, have not dared to hint an inſinuation ſo improbable. The race of the claimants is extinct; the pretenſions antiquated. Even Scotland has acquieſced in the preſent ſettlement; and in that favoured nation, which has been much leſs puniſhed than the Iriſh Roman Catholics, for proofs of attachment, incomparably more unequivocal, there is not now to be found a man who either retains himſelf or ſuſpects his neighbour of an affection to the Stuart family.

It is, indeed, very difficult to ſuppoſe that three millions of men, although no better appointed than with clubs and ruſtic implements, ſhould for a century have ſubmitted to a government of which they mortally hated both the forms and adminiſtrators; and a government ſurely not eſtabliſhed on any project for procuring their happineſs. Yet not alone were the Roman Catholics tranquil under theſe circumſtances, but they ſuſtained the teſt of two dangerous rebellions; and on * a third critical emergency, took arms to repel an enemy who had uſually afforded them refuge, and with whom their adverſaries were fond to inſinuate ſome latent connection.

* The intended French invaſion in the laſt war.

We muſt not omit the groſs and criminal abſurdity of puniſhing a ſuppoſed diſaffection, not manifeſted by any overt act, a velleity not diſcoverable in any part of this people's conduct; on the contrary, the Roman Catholics have on all occaſions loudly and ſtrenuouſly proclaimed their affection for the reigning family, and they are to be credited, for their profeſſion is conſiſtent with reaſon and experience, and what is alledged in contradiction is directly repugnant to both. Whilſt they are debarred all intercourſe with the conſtitution, who can demand of them more than phlegmatic approbation? To the ſovereign their feelings are, and ought to be, more animated; purſued with pitileſs antipathy, under the throne the Roman Catholics ſought protection. They were received with tenderneſs, and much mitigated of that rigorous doom which their country had denounced againſt them. A natural conſequence enſued, the Roman Catholics became partiſans of prerogative. Had the event been different, they had not been men; they had not poſſeſſed the ordinary emotions of a ſuſceptible heart, nor the ordinary diſcernment of a penetrating underſtanding; but from this very circumſtance, an argument of importance is to be adduced for the abolition of this prepoſterous juriſprudence, it opens an additional ſource of influence to the crown, and facilitates between the ſovereign and ſubject, a connection incompatible with freedom, and which evil and intereſted men may abuſe to the worſt purpoſes. The people ought to wreſt this jewel from the crown, but they ſhould not bury it. Two millions of men can never be viewed with indifference in the ſettlement of a nation; it is not to be expected, and leſs than ever in the preſent age, that like brutes, they may be guided at the fancy of their conductor. Let the democracy imitate for a ſalutary purpoſe that plan of attention and meekneſs which ſhould be viewed in the executive power with jealouſy; it

is ſurely not unworthy the notice of the friends of freedom to attempt a coalition with a large body of citizens, whoſe voice, if it were only to join in the outcry of liberty, muſt be important; and that is not an idle or contemptible experiment which aſcertains whether men, who in conſtitutional debates muſt be courted, becauſe they are numerous, incorrigibly perſiſt in a whimſical predilection for implicit obedience, or may not be won even by their own intereſt to eſpouſe the cauſe of liberty, and be employed as uſeful auxiliaries under the banners of the conſtitution.*

I cannot comprehend how any man, not inſane, ſhould be ſuſpected of gratuitouſly ſurrending his liberty, rather than his fortune, or any other advantage. Certainly, a charge ſo contradictory to common ſenſe, needs the corroboration of ſpecific evidence. I do not ſee this evidence; it is not in the doctrines which the church of Rome avows; it is not in the practice of the nations whom ſhe has educated: I ſpeak here of nations, not of cabinets. As to the deſpotiſm under which any Roman Catholic people has acquieſced, a ſimilar accuſation may be advanced againſt every religion on earth, for there is not one, of which the adherents have not been at ſome period polluted by implicit ſubmiſſion to an arbitrary monarch. Every deſpotiſm is a government of force, to which the ſubject yields involuntary obedience; and it might as well be inferred that a man is a lunatic becauſe he is detained in a mad-houſe, as that he is a favourer of deſpotiſm for being compelled to live under that form of government.

I will not diſſemble that the diſcipline of ſome of the reformed churches ſeems better calculated to impreſs upon the mind thoſe diſ-

* This idea might have been deemed almoſt viſionary when it was delivered in the firſt edition. We have the ſatisfaction now (1792) to ſee it univerſally approved and adopted.

poſitions

poſitions which a friend to freedom might wiſh to improve and cheriſh. The philoſopher who delivers the plan of an imaginary republic, would be authoriſed to ſelect his national religion from amongſt them. This is not our object; we are not to conſider what arrangement ſhould be made, if the land were to be colonized anew, or what deſcription of people would in a new ſettlement be moſt likely to deliver to their children a vigorous ſpirit of liberty, and to perpetuate a ſalutary ſyſtem of equal privilege. We are to inquire how the materials we have at hand may be moſt ſerviceably employed in the edifice of conſtitution we are deſirous to erect; the nature of things is not to be altered. The experience of a century proves that violence cannot change the temper of men, or their opinions. Is the country then to be haraſſed, becauſe a large proportion of the inhabitants cannot be prevailed on to give up Tranſubſtantiation and Purgatory, their reſpects for ſaints, and reverence of images? But why do we ſo often hear of the incompatibility of Popery with freedom? We have the experience of ancient and modern times to prove, that the religion of the church of Rome by no means ſtifles the voice of nature, which calls for liberty, "the divinity that ſtirs within us," and ſays we ſhould be free. With this evidence before us, when it is admitted that the forms of the church of Rome are the leaſt conſonant to a democratic ſpirit, the argument only proves, that ſo natural to man is the love of liberty, that it cannot by any biaſs, how ſtrong ſoever, be controuled, or perverted.

Although deſirous to maintain the ſtricteſt decorum, with regard to the eſtabliſhment, and to treat of what concerns it with cautious tenderneſs; we are led into a compariſon no way favourable to reformed epiſcopacy; it is the contraſt of the obligations, which the conſtitution has to the Church

of

of Rome, and of the merits, which the preſent Church dominant may plead, when called by the genius of Britain to account for its ſtewardſhip. It is ſtrange that the partiſans of the eſtabliſhment can ever allude to a religion of freedom; if ſuch is neceſſary, it cannot be the church of Ireland, nor any other that conſecrates an hierarchy; it muſt be Preſbyterianiſm, Socinianiſm, Independants; it muſt be Diſſent, in ſome of its wildeſt ſhapes, and moſt eccentric modifications. The cauſe of liberty is much indebted to the general body of Diſſenters; we owe to them, that the labours of paſt times were not effaced; that the noble Saxon edifice of the conſtitution was not levelled. Of nearly equal magnitude are the ſervices rendered by the Roman Catholics. In ages of Popery we obtained Magna Charta, trial by jury, the repreſentation in parliament, and the right of popular impeachment. The Roman Catholics drew the outlines of liberty; many of its nobleſt features aroſe under their pencil; the maſterly hand of Preſbyterianiſm retouched the piece, revived ſome faded lineaments, and gave to the countenance an air of youth and animated energy. We can ſcarcely allow to the Church of England the credit of retaining what it acccidentally had acquired. Without the ſtrong curb of the ſectaries, paſſive obedience had at this hour been the current loyalty of theſe iſlands. It was the language of prelates, it was inculcated in pulpits, it was ſanctioned by Univerſities. During the reign of Popery, reſiſtance, we may preſume, was taught, for it undoubtedly was practiſed. The evidence of hiſtory is certainly againſt the preſent eſtabliſhment; but it is not too late to retrieve its character. Much remains to be done ere the conſtitution of Ireland ſhall attain perfection. Let the church cooperate in the meaſures which are calculated to promote the general welfare of the nation. Happy ſhould we be to ſee this charge of indolent acqui-

eſcence refuted by ſuch unqueſtionable teſtimony; and to be able to thank the eſtabliſhment, for having contributed to accompliſh any of theſe great deſigns to which the people of Ireland direct their views with anxious expectation.*

It is not ſtrange, that the animoſity of party ſhould ſtill prevail in Ireland. Every good man muſt lament the evil; it is the duty of thoſe, who have been enabled to riſe ſuperior to the abſurd antipathy, to expoſe its weakneſs, and its tendency. We are not above the third in deſcent from the exaſperated foes, who contended at the Boyne and Aughrim; and the Apoſtles of Freedom, who bleſſed us with conſtitution and commerce, have not been able to expel the viper, prejudice, which had fattened and ſwoln in that ſeaſon of calamity. The greater number ſeem to have attached an unaccountable fancy to the expreſſion, Freedom: as if, to brow-beat Papiſts were the only privilege worth contending for. As members of the ſtate, the Roman Catholics are intitled to privileges; they are additionally ſo, as good citizens poſſeſſing a ſtake in the country; yet, when the claim is mentioned, an alarm ariſes, as if it were not a requeſt timidly urged, and by ſuitors who have ſcarcely influence to obtain an hearing; but, that it were propoſed to effect a general and ſudden transfer of power, patronage, and property from the hands which now poſſeſs them. If they are told of the univerſal of equal freedom, of an extinction of parties, and of univerſal co-operation for one general purpoſe, the proſperity of their country, and of the empire, they produce that monſter in politics, *their Proteſtant Government*, long a favourite

* There is at this day a Proteſtant prelate, Dr. Law, whoſe exemplary and conciliating conduct has endeared him to the Iriſh people. The inſtance is rare, not unprecedented. The good Biſhop Bedel lived amidſt the bleſſings, and died amidſt the tears of the Iriſh Catholics.

appellation, and which, if any idea is conveyed by the term, muſt be underſtood to expreſs what the moſt common obſervation and vulgar intellect can refute, that the intereſt of the country is better conſulted by permitting the aſcendant of an oligarchy to prevail in it. No idea is more prevalent or more falſe, than that the revolution produced to Ireland the double advantage of relieving it from deſpotiſm in religion and politics. The fact is, that under king James the Iriſh contended for their liberties. If he had ſucceeded, a free conſtitution was guaranteed to their country; the eſtabliſhment of a bad ſyſtem of government was the effect of their overthrow. Never could any age or nation boaſt a more honourable band of Patriots, than the men who at that period took a lead in Iriſh politics. They clearly diſcerned, and honourably purſued the intereſts of their country. Let us coolly inveſtigate their conduct; and if meaſures, not men, are to obtain approbation, we ſhall find the merits of the Iriſh Roman Catholics far from inconſiderable, and not the leſs conſpicuous, when contraſted with the ſhameful dereliction of their country's rights, by thoſe who ſhortly after aſſumed the title of *friends* of *freedom*. When they engaged in the party of king James, the Iriſh Roman Catholics acted with a public-ſpirited regard for the national intereſt. Even in England the ſettlement of the crown was difficult and delicate; ſome of the moſt ſtrenuous for correcting abuſes heſitated at the bold infringement of hereditary ſucceſſion; ſome of the moſt virtuous men in the nation refuſed concurrence, or even aſſent to it. If in a lettered country, among the luminaries of Europe, the queſtion was pronounced full of hazard and perplexity, what muſt it have been, where the ſword was as yet, ſole arbiter of right and wrong? where abſtruſe political reaſoning had never been touched on, nor mention made of the

metaphyſic rules by which at this day all great deciſions are regulated? The repreſentatives of the Iriſh nation did not ſimply commit themſelves upon a barren ſpeculation. Loyalty attracted the people to the ſtandard of a forlorn monarch, the firſt of the blood royal, who for ages had appeared amongſt them. But the chiefs were not drawn by impulſe to the field; in England, they ſaw a ſettled policy to depreſs their country; it was immaterial whether James deſerved well or ill of his Britiſh ſubjects. Whilſt England was unwilling to treat their country with kindneſs, ſhe had no claim upon the affections of the Iriſh. Aſſembled in parliament, with all conſtitutional ſolemnity, they ſtipulated, as the price of their aſſiſtance, for a complete charter of legiſlative independence, and commercial freedom. That they were not ſupple courtiers, we have the evidence of James himſelf. He exclaimed, "All "commons are ſimilar," when they boldly queſtioned his prerogative, and cenſured his favourite Lord Melfort. If they had been willing to conſult their private intereſts, they might have obtained from William enviable conditions of perſonal immunity and religious toleration. The temper of that prince diſpoſed him to mildneſs; and circumſtanced as he then was, a cruſade was far from deſirable. Such were the perſons whom it is faſhionable to depreciate, and upon whoſe ſuppoſed predilection for arbitrary government a very ſerious accuſation againſt the Roman Catholics is grounded. Such was the band of patriots whoſe acts were annulled, whoſe honours were cancelled, and whoſe names were vilified by the aſſembly, which expelled Molyneux, and condemned to the flames his caſe of Ireland. Upon this pile periſhed the Phœnix liberty; entombed for a century, ſhe has again revived, ſhall we by our bickerings diſguſt the lovely ſtranger, and

ſcare

ſcare her from amongſt us, by the view of our unworthy jealouſies?

It is not for us, at this day, to lament the event of that conflict; we muſt diſcriminate between the advantage of the empire, and that of a particular part conſtrained to adopt a diſtinct intereſt. I apologize not for king James, but for thoſe who were well authoriſed to turn his misfortunes, nay, his vices and his crimes, to the profit of their country. Ireland is now admitted into a partnerſhip in that conſtitution which required, in order to perfect it, the correction and example of a revolution. But the Roman Catholics of the laſt century poſſeſſed not the gift of ſecond ſight; they could not foreſee that a complication of fortuitous events, ſhould, in the lapſe of a century, unfold to poſterity the proſpect of a ſyſtem of liberty, far ſuperior to what was at that day attainable. That golden opportunity ſhould again return, that lucky criſis in the affairs of nations, as of individuals, which, if ſuffered to elapſe, is to be recovered with ſo much difficulty. They had no Merlin to predict that the ſeaſon of emergency, when the aid of every virtue, and of every talent was requiſite, ſhould be bleſſed with a rich harveſt of exalted characters, men, to whoſe moderation their country is not leſs indebted than to their wiſdom. By the effect of whoſe healing counſels we can contemplate with ſatisfaction that, liberty, of which the triumph in other countries is marked with havoc and deſolation, marched in Ireland with bloodleſs and peaceable ovation to her throne.

The next objection, that which ſuppoſes the tenures of property in Ireland, not ſufficiently confirmed, although ſpeciouſly produced, and well calculated to ſow diſſenſions and excite alarm, is not better fortified againſt inveſtigation. It is refuted by every deed of mortgage and conveyance, which has been paſſed in Ireland ſince the Reſtoration.

tion. If the landed property of Ireland was not ſecurely held, no man of ſenſe could think to purchaſe or ſettle in the country; it ſhould be conſidered, as not much better than Turkey, where the Sultan is every man's heir, and only as a convenient ſtation for procuring wealth, as India is by the ſervants of the company. One ſhould ſcarcely expect to receive a ſerious anſwer from a man, if, having within reach the ſolid ſecurity of the Engliſh funds, it ſhould be recommended to him to purchaſe in a country, of which all the tenures are to be queſtioned, when an event, the moſt likely and deſirable, ſhall take place; when the people ſhall become more free, and the yeomanry more comfortable. Immediately at the Reſtoration, when the claims were recent, the claimants alive, with their merits, and a vaſt deal of power to plead for them, it was found impoſſible to diſpoſſeſs the new proprietors. In the parliament held by king James, when the aggrieved party was in the plenitude of authority, the matter was taken up with delicacy, and moſt cautiouſly proceeded on.* No civilized nation has ever afforded an example of a re-aſſumption of lands long poſſeſſed, or which had been the ſubject of civil contracts. Is it then poſſible that any man who has obſerved the influence of even recently acquired property, can be ſerious in his hypotheſis? That after a century and a half of peaceable poſſeſſion, fortified in their claim, by the long liſt of connections, creditors, tenants, and dependants, the landed intereſt of Ireland ſhould have, ſo little weight that a government would attempt, or ſo little ſtrength that a government dare attempt, to change the poſſeſſion of the country, and

* It was propoſed by king James's Parliament to revive the court of claims, which had been diſcontinued, in order to diſcriminate between thoſe who merited to forfeit for their rebellion, and the perſons diſpoſſeſſed by Cromwell, and to re-imburſe all the debenturers, whom it ſhould be found neceſſary to eject.

compliment

compliment with their ſpoil an handful of neglected beggars.*

But who are to act in this revolution? and by what event is it likely to be facilitated? By the ac-

* To my original argument, (firſt edition,) on this ſubject I muſt add, that the preſent ſettlement is guaranteed by England, and that on account of the abſentee rents, England has juſt the ſame inducements to preſerve the inheritance of the preſent landed proprietors, which ſhe has to keep her ſugar iſlands, or any other poſſeſſion; the following requiſites are therefore indiſpenſably neceſſary, that the alteration ſhould be effected. Firſt, That the Roman Catholics ſhould have an intereſt to produce this revolution; that is, that no men ſhould acquire property under the preſent ſettlement, but the direct heirs of the old forfeitors. Secondly, That they ſhould become a majority of the electors. Thirdly, That they ſhould become a majority of repreſentatives. Fourthly, That the preſent peerage ſhall become extinct, or the members who compoſe it be reconciled to the ſee of Rome. Fifthly, That the peers ſhould have an intereſt in the re-aſſumption. Sixthly, That the king ſhould be diſpoſed to ſanction it. Seventhly, That the Engliſh nation, including the abſentees, ſhould be inclined to permit it. It may be neceſſary to inform thoſe who are unacquainted with the internal ſtate of Ireland, that the firſt three requiſites are as difficult to be accompliſhed as the latter ones. Five-ſixths of the Iriſh Catholics hold their property under the act of ſettlement, either as poſſeſſors of land, mortgagees, or creditors; and not one in a thouſand repreſents a forfeiting family. The Roman Catholic property of Ireland, both real and perſonal, is ſo far inferior to that of Proteſtants, that in order to give the former an electioneering influence, it would require ſome centuries during which Proteſtants alone ſhould alienate, and Catholics alone have the opportunity of acquiring. This extends but to counties and free cities; the boroughs are then to be gained, a work of more centuries. It would furniſh matter for a curious ſpeculation to conſider, what new interpretation of the goſpel might ariſe in that ſpace of time to ſuperſede the preſent diſtinctions. It may alſo be neceſſary to acquaint the ſame claſs of readers, that thoſe Catholics who have purchaſed of late, have indiſcriminately expended their money on old and new titles, and what proves to demonſtration, that the titles are unqueſtionable, the lands acquired under the forfeitures of the laſt century bring at market the ſame price as the grants of Henry the Second, the oldeſt titles known in Ireland. Indeed, on the purchaſe of an eſtate, no man inquires, whether the tenure is by the act of ſettlement, or prior to that period.

quiſition

quiſition of new power and conſequence to the Roman Catholics. That is, men, who have borne without a murmur, the oppreſſion of a ſevere government, are, at the inſtant their ſituation becomes tolerable, to create a confuſion, which deſpair could not have prompted; and to expend their ready money on the acquiſition of property, without any motive whatever, but that they may be able to caſt it into a ſcramble, to be ſeized at random by the moſt fortunate and enterpriſing. The Roman Catholics cannot acquire influence or property, unleſs under the preſent ſettlement; and they muſt be more enthuſiaſtic in their notions of right, than any people whom hiſtory has recorded, if, after having obtained independence by the ordinary means, they would embark in the ſea of civil commotion, and refer to enjoy the eaſe and certain property they poſſeſs, rather than unſettle the entire nation, in order to procure emolument for other perſons. It is not to be underſtood that every man whom accident or parſimony has brought to the poſſeſſion of wealth, muſt, becauſe he profeſſes their religion, have of conſequence a direct claim of inheritance under the old forfeitors. The vanity of many new families may be ſoothed by an attempt to trace their lineage to this venerable ſtock. But there certainly are not at this moment five hundred Roman Catholics in Ireland, who, if a court of claims were eſtabliſhed, could prove that a patrimony, except for the accident of forfeiture, ought to have devolved upon them. Many of theſe ſuffering families have languiſhed in want, and pined into oblivion. Many ſought refuge with their unhappy leader at the Revolution. Others have conformed to the eſtabliſhment, and conſtitute at preſent a very diſtinguiſhed * portion of the Church of Ireland. As the law entertains no

* Some of this deſcription are among the ſtrenuous oppoſers of that great national queſtion, the Catholic emancipation.

jealouſy

jealouſy of them, theſe are not to be counted againſt the Roman Catholics. I am aſhamed to have dwelt ſo long on a frivolous objection, which ſuppoſes that the interference of a few powerful chiefs is ſufficient to change the property of a country. The claim of the Iriſh forfeitors is at this day chimerical and antiquated. Our grandfathers do not recollect the change; our fathers found the iſland ſettled in tranquillity; and all the ſolemn laws and compacts of the ſtate muſt be, but as tranſitory and effectual ſhadows in the eyes of him, who ſuppoſes that this ſettlement can be violated. The preſent land-holders of Ireland may reſt at eaſe; they have as little reaſon to apprehend diſturbance from the old proprietors, as from theſe ſtill prior occupants of the ſoil, the wolf dogs.

CHAP. IV.

The Eſtabliſhment.

THE effects of the propoſed repeal, on the intereſts of the eſtabliſhed Church, deſerve a diſtinct conſideration. I will not ſay, reaſoning on the abſtract queſtion of right, that any eſtabliſhment ought to be ſet in competition with the intereſts of a people. It would certainly be juſt to render to every man that which belongs to him, and leave to heaven, whom they profeſs to honour, the care and ſecurity of religious eſtabliſhment. But paſſion and intereſt ſway more in ſociety, than rules of abſtract juſtice. We cannot expect that men, having in their hands the power to confer kindneſs, or offer injury, will refrain from the one, or preſent the other, unleſs the act to their own concerns be proved advantageous, or at leaſt indifferent. It is reaſonable on the ſubject of this demand to quiet the alarm of the Clergy, and the more ſo, as the taſk of giving ſatisfaction is by no means difficult. Far from ſuppoſing it unſafe for the Clergy of this, or any other eſtabliſhed Church, that the ſubordinate ſects ſhould enjoy the moſt perfect liberty; it would ſeem to be a meaſure of correct and ſagacious policy to remove every diſqualification, by which the great body of the people is affected. For the mere pre-eminence of eccleſiaſtics, none but bigots will contend, and theſe in numbers too inconſiderable to excite apprehenſion. But where the more ſolid advantages of ſociety are withheld, where men are provoked by idle experiments on their pride, or their patience, the moſt moderate will

will be induced to make a common cauſe, and an haughty hierarchy will be ſometimes levelled, in a common ſlaughter of oppreſſive pretenſions. In the preſent ſtate of Europe, whilſt there occur ſo many inducements to ſpeculation, whilſt the public mind is ſo ripe for inquiry, unleſs the free preſs, and parliamentary conſtitution be abrogated in Ireland, the Roman Catholics muſt perceive, that by poſſeſſing the advantages and immunities of a Britiſh ſubject, they ſhould become more reſpected, more ſecure, and more happy. If they inquire, why is this condition denied to them? and learn that the eſtabliſhment is the author of their degradation; that they ſuffer an unjuſt and unqualified disfranchiſement, merely becauſe the favoured religion chuſes to indulge in ill-founded apprehenſions, and inflicts this penalty, leſt it might be incommoded by their freedom. They will neceſſarily confound in common antipathy, the evil, and the cauſe of it. Great allowances are to be made for the anxiety of the Clergy: it is natural that thoſe, who hold property, ſhould cautiouſly weigh, whatever is repreſented to interfere with their poſſeſſions; on no other occaſion are the feelings of men ſo exquiſitely alive, nor do we recoil, from the rude touch of reform, with more ſenſitive irritability. But let the body of Iriſh eccleſiaſtics, proceeding one ſtep further, inquire from their quick ſenſibility, whether he who enjoys wealth, does not feel an earneſtneſs to retain it? the anſwer will probably be in the affirmative, and they will be convinced by the moſt deciſive evidence, the teſtimony of their ſenſes, that even in the cauſe of the Church, a Roman Catholic, unleſs he be more attached to his religion than they are, is very little likely to endanger his fortune. It is not by a wiſh, or magic incantation, that an eſtabliſhment, fenced by laws, and upheld by power, is to be ſubverted. The Church of Ireland is defended by a large over-

proportion of the property of the nation, which is in the poſſeſſion of its zealous votaries. It is guaranteed by England, and protected by the jealouſy of all deſcriptions of Proteſtants, who would certainly combine to prevent a tranſlation of power to the Roman hierarchy. They who attack this well-ſecured eſtabliſhment, muſt diſpoſe themſelves to encounter a formidable oppoſition, the Proteſtants of Ireland, backed by the unanimous concurrence of Great Britain. And who are theſe frantic Papiſts, if they enjoy the comforts of life, and a competent ſhare in the beſt government exiſting, who will commit their fortunes and lives, the hopes of their children, and proſperity of their country, on the event of a ſilly conflict for tithes and biſhoprics? The natural ſtrength of the Catholics has been over-borne for a century, and the powers which have ſo long depreſſed it, are ſtill competent to produce the ſame effect. When it is alledged, that if reſtored to the privileges of free citizens, they would not ſubmit to the precedency of the eſtabliſhed Church; we argue as if their propenſity to commotion was to increaſe, in proportion as their motives were removed, and that they ſhould begin to diſturb the public tranquillity, merely becauſe they had an additional intereſt to preſerve it. The hypotheſis is exactly this, that men, who already have been forced to ſubmit to every ſpecies of privation, ſhould arm at the inſtant all inducement to hoſtility had ceaſed, and fly madly from the banquet of freedom, to which they had been invited, into an enterprize, calculated only to gratify their vanity.

I will not ſuppoſe the Roman Catholics ſo widely to differ from the reſt of men, that they would not wiſh, if a wiſh could effect the purpoſe, to ſee their own party prevail, and their own liturgy univerſally eſtabliſhed. I know, that in the character of that ſect, there enters no ſtronger diſpoſition, than

that

that of reverence to their Clergy; and that many articles, both of doctrine and diſcipline, have a tendency to confirm this ſentiment. When I aſſert, that the abolition of the Popery Laws cannot affect the eſtabliſhment, I do not ground my argument on any ſuppoſed forbearance of the Roman Catholics, ſuch preſumption muſt be, either weak or diſingenuous. I reaſon on the utter impoſſibility that any attempt againſt the eſtabliſhment ſhould prove ſucceſsful. In order that an alteration ſhould be effected, it muſt, as before, come recommended by England; or Ireland, in point of number and territorial influence, muſt nearly be unanimous. When five-ſixths of the landholders were rigid Roman Catholics, in defiance of the moſt ſtrenuous oppoſition, the Engliſh liturgy was introduced, the old clergy ejected, and the reformation triumphantly eſtabliſhed. Nay more, aided by England, the Proteſtants, at that time intruders, were enabled to rob their adverſaries of power and of privilege, and to deface every trait which might denote their lineage from a free people. When freedom and property were the ſtake, you buffetted them at your fancy; and now when the riſk is only of precedence, for which none but perſons of weak capacity would expoſe themſelves, as if conſcious that religion was not ſufficient to create diſcontent, we caſt ambition and intereſt into the ſcale; we fetter down our vigorous and youthful country, ſoaring with an eagle wing into the boldeſt flights of aggrandiſement, and purſuing with an eagle eye the animating ſun of freedom; and for what? For a viſion of danger, to be realiſed but in the remote lapſe of centuries, and by a coincidence of events chimerical even in proſpect, that England ſhould be reconciled to the See of Rome, and the race of Iriſh Proteſtants become extinct or beggared. With equal juſtice, and much ſounder policy, the legiſlature might extend

tend its care to the dominion of Saints, and provide for the ſecurity of Proteſtantiſm in the Millennium. Similar arguments were uſed to elude the repeal of thoſe ſcandalous ſtatutes which ſcarcely left to us the benefit of air and water. They were advanced alike when it was propoſed to repel the teſt act. On both occaſions the nation was warned againſt the dangers of rivalſhip; on both occaſions the caution was treated with contempt, and the country has proſpered under the ſalutary meaſures which were adopted. By this conſideration the advocates of intolerance might be induced to relax ſomewhat of their oppoſition. Notwithſtanding every apprehenſion, the reformed Diſſenters are not, at this day, more powerful, than they were fourteen years back; and if danger could be apprehended from any, it muſt rather have been from the Preſbyterians; they have a powerful party in England, and Scotland is at their ſide unanimous. The Roman Catholics, unleſs they can influence Saints and Martyrs in their cauſe, ſeem little likely to procure auxiliaries. If the Church of Ireland wiſhes to rival the Romiſh Clergy in popularity, it ought to commence by proofs of condeſcenſion. He who poſſeſſes pre-eminence and authority, if he bear the one with meekneſs, and exerciſe the other in clemency, ſtarts in the competition with infinite advantages. A conſequence directly contrary may be expected to enſue, where precedence is haughtily maintained, and ſuperiority wielded as a rod of iron. Hence in every country the diſinclination of ſubordinate ſects to the church dominant; which, miſ-ſtating facts, and miſapplying experience, we uſually attribute to the motives of diſſent, not to the circumſtances to which diſſent gives origin.

It may be hoped, that ſufficient arguments have been advanced to prove, that the eſtabliſhed church can have no advantage in promoting the continuance of theſe ſtatutes. In the days of moſt

extravagant enthuſiaſm, never did the bare intereſts of the clergy draw any deſcription of religioniſts into competition with their rulers. We proceed farther to eſtabliſh, that it is the duty of the Church of Ireland, as it tenders what it muſt ſuppoſe, the cauſe of truth, to ſet an example to the univerſe of unlimited toleration. Every argument, which can be uſed to juſtify the coercion of Roman Catholics in this country, may be equally applied to its own caſe in a nation adhering to the Church of Rome, or to any other ſyſtem of religious worſhip. The ſafety of eſtabliſhments, if once admitted to depend on perſecution, may be alledged as a pretext for the inquiſition, or any meaſure of ſeverity which the diſcretion of a legiſlature ſhall think convenient. Thus, by immediate conſequence, their obſtinacy warrants the perſecution of every Proteſtant in Europe. There are thoſe who affect the oſtentatious title of patrons and defenders of the Church of Ireland; if ſuch perſons feel, that the doctrines they ſo warmly eſpouſe, bear the evidence of truth, why not commence the glorious work of toleration? By doing ſo, they unbar to their doctrines the gates of every nation, and clear the way for the admiſſion of true religion into the countries in which it is prohibited. They will remove from the church, to which they profeſs attachment, an imputation that muſt ever be affixed in the minds of plain obſervers, that force is a ſubſtitute employed to ſupply the dearth of argument. That if any more happy expedient could be uſed to produce conviction, they ſhould not propagate their doctrines by pecuniary rewards and puniſhments. Such language certainly cannot, in the preſent form of things, be reprehended. It is encouraged by the laws of Ireland. It has been encouraged by zealots, who have ventured to declare, that although the firſt convert might not be ſincere in his profeſſions, his poſterity

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will at length be confirmed in the opinions of the reformation. Will the national clergy ſubmit to this imputation; that unlike the primitive church, of which the ſeed was the blood of martyrs, the foundation of the Church of Ireland ſhould be laid in hypocriſy, and that it requires two or three generations of prevarication and apoſtacy, to procure to the land the bleſſing of a good Proteſtant?

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Dangers to the Conſtitution from the Popery Laws, and the general Impropriety, in a free State, of ſuch Reſtrictions.

REASONING on the Popery Laws with a reference to the conſtitution, a capital objection preſents itſelf. In every free ſtate the ſupreme magiſtrate is the object of jealouſy; his powers of action are more concentrated, his intereſt in the ruin of freedom more immediate. The patriot ſtateſman marks his conduct with vigilance, dexterouſly purſues the ſecret motives of action, and exerts the utmoſt activity to counteract his enterprizes; but in this inſtance the ſyſtem of controuls is inverted. The check is impoſed upon the people, for the advantage of the monarch, not upon the ſovereign, in behalf of the people.

So repugnant to the genius and principles of liberty are theſe reſtrictions, that to a perſon who conſiders the Iriſh nation, anxious to retain its free conſtitution, every article muſt appear an act of infatuation. If it were poſſible that a race of beings could exiſt, debaſed, degenerate, and ſo unlike the common character of man, as to deem the regulation of their own actions a toil, and who ſhould ſyſtematically prefer to hold their lives and fortunes from the caprice of a monarch, rather than by the liberal ſecurity which the Britiſh conſtitution offers; if we could ſuppoſe that any climate, manner, or inſtitutions, could thus warp, and pervert the human mind from its accuſtomed tenor of thought and

action, and that this vilified order of wretches were the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland; an alien obſerver, indifferent in the choice of parties, would thus be induced to deſcribe, and to reaſon on, this part of our government. " On the Britiſh iſlands, the favour of heaven has beſtowed the beſt government, and the moſt perfect ſyſtem of civil liberty, which has yet been eſtabliſhed. Of this invaluable boon the poſſeſſors are juſtly tenacious. It is the ſtrength and ornament of their country. A doubt has ariſen, whether one deſcription of citizens are in this cauſe, alike zealous as their fellows, without examining the merits of the charge, by the moſt obvious evidences, without conſidering whether it is admitted by their profeſſions, juſtified by their intereſts, or corroborated by their paſſions. A ſentence of degradation is awarded, the moſt rigorous doom a nation can denounce. Heedleſs of the general character of man, placable by kindneſs, unaccommodating under harſh exertions of authority, it is not endeavoured by conciliatory methods to change their perverſe nature. They are alienated ſtill more, by being abſolutely deprived of every inducement to repentance. In a limited monarchy, the ſovereign is an object of attention and miſtruſt, yet to his cuſtody theſe formidable culprits are committed. Thus facilitating to him the means of influence, and extending the connection of intercourſe and dependence. Upon the eaſieſt terms, ſimply by abſtaining from injury, an aſpiring monarch may at any time ingratiate himſelf with this numerous body. An oſtentatious parade of clemency binds them to his cauſe by affection and intereſt. Thus, of every mode that could be deviſed, for managing a people ſuſpected of diſaffection, the moſt improper was adopted. They are permitted to acquire the influence of wealth, and almoſt enjoined to direct that important engine againſt the liberties of their country.

They are in a free ſtate marked out, as improper guardians of the public welfare. Is it then ſurpriſing, that they want ardour to ſupport that freedom, from any participation in which they are ſedulouſly excluded? The cauſe of aſtoniſhment ſhould rather be, that no ſovereign as yet endeavoured to ſeize this dangerous inſtrument of influence, and wield it with effect againſt the liberties of his country. But let the people of Ireland beware, there are many inducements to undermine their rights, and they have no reaſon to ſuppoſe, that agents and adviſers will not be found for ſuch a meaſure. Competition for the crown has long ceaſed. Already the relation between the ſovereign and people is eſſentially altered. Facts within our own memory ſufficiently prove, that the reigning family are not conſidered utterly dependent on the uſual ſupporters of their greatneſs. Thanks to the virtues of thoſe by whom we are likely to be governed, we can indulge the pleaſing viſion of a patriot reign. Such dangers are remote, but not impoſſible. No royal family would deem the compariſon degrading, to hear that a ſpirit like that of Lewis XIV, reſtleſs, haughty, enterpriſing and ambitious, may animate ſome of its poſterity; and there is no ſecurity, that the deep, judicious policy of Richelieu, may not ſucceſsfully be imitated by future miniſters."

Our reaſoner might proceed with great appearance of juſtice, and conſider the Popery Laws, as a ſyſtem deviſed to prepare for abſolute monarchy. Certainly, every intereſt and every paſſion of the Roman Catholics ought, if their paſſions and intereſts reſemble thoſe of other men, to lead them to co-operate in ſuch an eſtabliſhment. Their intereſt, for enjoying no common benefit of a free conſtitution, they can have no common concern to promote it, and in the univerſal debaſement of deſpotiſm, they might expect more

impartial attentions. Their paſſions, it is the nature of man, to reſiſt dominion, to deſire equality; the ſuſpicious muſt ever expect to be reluctantly ſerved, want of confidence diminiſhes the anxiety to deſerve it. In the political, not leſs than in the moral world, to infringe on reputation is ſevere, and leads to depravity. I have touched before on the injuſtice, it is my province here to remark the impolicy of ſuch ſuſpicion. Indeed, throughout this entire ſyſtem, theſe defects go hand in hand, want of common juſtice is blended with want of common prudence. If the Roman Catholics were, as they have been repreſented, incorrigibly culpable in their political opinions and attachments, the bonds impoſed are inſufficient for the ſecurity of the ſtate; they ſhould not be fettered, but exterminated. If liberty, a bleſſing fondly cheriſhed, and purchaſed with ſo much hazard, is to be preſerved, the Roman Catholics of Ireland are too ſtrong or too weak; poſſeſſed of too much ſtrength, if they are to be deemed enemies; far too feeble, if to be expected as auxiliaries. Every argument urged againſt them applies with more efficacy to a ſentence of univerſal maſſacre. Reputation rewards the labour of the generous mind, and encourages the lukewarm to praiſeworthy actions. It ought not on trivial or frivolous pretexts to be withheld, and men ſolemnly and publicly proclaimed objects of miſtruſt to their fellow citizens. If attachment be precarious, theſe are not the means of conciliation; nor is fidelity thus to be recalled, when it wavers. Conſult the common occurrences of life; the tale of calamity, in which all the woes, and all the arrogance of men are recorded, we there learn what an awful ſentence that is, which infringes upon a good name; how frequently, if the amiable and innocent be expoſed to the judgement of the world, and to the bitter ſentence of excluſion, ſo often uttered at that haughty tribunal; degraded

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in their own and in the public eſtimation, and thus deprived of the ſtrongeſt incentive to good conduct, they ſink into the debaſement, which malevolence had prepared for them. In this obſervation, there is enough of man's general character, to juſtify the application to political, as well as moral conduct.

The friends of the conſtitution may place reliance in another laudable prepoſſeſſion. That ſelf-importance, which attaches to every individual of a free ſtate; that ſenſe of honour, and ſhame of derelict-ion, which holds the centinel to his poſt; which confirms the virtue, and even invigorates the induſtry of a free people. We need not ſeek recondite evidence to ſupport this fact, that man thrives in the garden of freedom; the authority of travellers might be cited, and every perſon called to witneſs, who has obſerved the difference of manners in the nations around us. The dejected aſpect of deſpotiſm, its gloomy and deſponding viſage, its ſluggard air and ſlovenly attire, the contraſt of cheerful and ſprightly comfort, where the ſtamp of government is different. I ſhall collect proofs from the land we live in. It unhappily furniſhes ſufficient to evince, that in order completely to ſink him in his own opinion, a man need not feel the laſh of authority, or ſee the hand uplifted to inflict it. I illuſtrate my opinion by the contraſt of character in the Engliſh and Iriſh peaſantry. Of the Engliſh, bold, enterpriſing, and induſtrious, erect with honeſt pride, and conſcious independence. Of the Iriſh, ſervile, ſpiritleſs, and ſluggiſh, dragging their chain in hopeleſs deſpondency, and ſubmitting to indignities which give the dominion of their petty tyrants, not a little the reſemblance of a gang of ſlaves and their inſolent overſeer. The Engliſhman, at the approach of inſult, or menace of danger, flies into the ſacred ſanctuary of juſtice; it is ever open as the paternal

manſion

manſion to a favourite child; he is not, like the wretched cottager of Ireland, rebuffed with the contumely of a changeling or an outcaſt. I illuſtrate it ſtill more by the contraſt of character in the north and ſouth of Ireland. Indeed, in the ſouth, the compariſon may be drawn ſtill cloſer; the diſparity is not more fairly marked between any two races of men on earth, than between the Proteſtants and Roman Catholics of nearly the ſame rank in humble life, not diſtinguiſhed by any phyſical or moral difference, ſave only that the former feel a conſciouſneſs of ſuperiority, and that the occaſional exerciſe of the elective franchiſe contributes to cheriſh and to confirm this ſentiment. I will be told that this right can confer but ſmall importance. It is true, but yet "theſe little "things are great to little men;" it is ſufficient for their ſtate in life, and produces a conſiderable effect upon their principles and conduct.

I anticipate an objection that will ariſe from the ſtate of repreſentation. It will be alledged that the means of procuring influence at elections will be facilitated, when the diſqualification of religion is removed, and the number increaſed of thoſe, who are competent to accept freeholds. Exactly the reverſe. Admitting Roman Catholics to vote at county elections, would, in fact, prove a moſt unexceptionable plan of parliamentary reform. It is the great evil of this country, and that which vitiates the entire ſyſtem of repreſentation, that the right of ſuffrage is not enjoyed by a ſufficient number; in proportion as the number of electors are limited, the election is itſelf leſs free, becauſe men of rank can predominate more by the weight of their connections and dependents. If this fact needs confirmation, we have evidence in the contraſt of great commercial cities with ſmall potwalloping boroughs; the Scotch counties have each but few freeholders, and ſcarcely in one of them is the repreſentative returned by

by popular nomination; on the contrary, in the counties of England the electors are numerous, the repreſentatives are repeatedly altered, and at all times held in awe of their conſtituents. By enabling the Roman Catholics to vote, the uſe of occaſional freeholders will nearly be aboliſhed. It would be a waſte of money to make but few, and no fortune could bear the expence of a ſufficient number to create any very decided influence. The independent Roman Catholics would form an admirable recruit to the popular intereſt in counties, and the effect of the entire alteration would be to render the gentry better landlords; to extend more widely the controul of property over power; to enliſt a numerous body of auxiliaries under the banners of freedom, and incorporate them with the veteran guards and forces of the conſtitution.*

And what are the arguments againſt this complete manumiſſion? They have been already urged to prevent the former alteration of the acts of parliament againſt Popery, and the experience of above thirteen years has amply and happily refuted

* "It may appear at firſt ſight of little conſequence whether "perſons in common ranks of life enjoy any ſhare of political "liberty or not. But without this there cannot be that per- "ſuaſion of independence, which alone can encourage a man to "make great exertions. A man who is ſenſible that he is at the "diſpoſal of others, over whoſe conduct he has no controul, "has always ſome unknown evil to dread. He will be afraid "of attracting the notice of his ſuperior, and muſt feel himſelf "a mean and degraded being. But a ſenſe of liberty, and "knowledge of the laws, by which his conduct muſt be go- "verned, with ſome degree of controul over thoſe who make "and adminiſter the laws, gives him a conſtant feeling of his "own importance, and leads him to indulge in a free and "manly turn of thinking, which makes him greatly ſuperior to "what he would have been under an arbitrary form of govern- "ment." *Prieſtly on General Policy.* It might be almoſt believed that this illuſtrious writer had Ireland in view when he expreſſed his theſe ſentiments.

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them. But cogent, indeed, are the arguments which warrant the meaſure; we are cajoled by feigned apprehenſions of the Pope, when, in fact, our watchfulneſs ſhould be of our miniſters: they are preſent and powerful, he, feeble and remote. Does any man in his ſenſes ſuppoſe that the Roman Catholics would embroil themſelves with the Proteſtants of Ireland, or draw down the force of England upon their heads, to make a pope their monarch, or a cardinal their viceroy? This is not the age for ſuch attempts, or ſuch ſpeculations; the pretenſions of his holineſs are as little likely to diſturb the future tranquillity of Ireland, as thoſe of the Turk and Devil, with whom it not long ſince was the faſhion to combine him. But we complain, and the evil is at our doors, that adminiſtration is not reſponſible to parliament; that parliament itſelf is not reſponſible to the people. Can we expect it ſhould be otherwiſe? The name of people is profaned; it is uſurped by a committee of the nation, who barter the right to govern themſelves for permiſſion to exerciſe a pernicious authority over their fellows. They are not attended to, becauſe when they ſpeak, they come not accompanied by the dignity of national property, and the energy of national population. The majeſty of the Iriſh people is dethroned; it is preſerved but as a pretender, and only produced when occaſion requires to intimidate the ſovereign; ſerved, indeed, with great external profeſſions of decorum, but knocked on the head if any effort to improve its condition ſhould be attempted.

Public men in this country are not compelled to look downwards; the great are ſuffered to ſeparate their intereſt from that of the people. They do not owe their parliamentary ſituations to popular favour; they are returned, either becauſe they have at their diſpoſal, boroughs conſiſting of eight or ten electors, nominated by themſelves; or that

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they have under their own controul, and that of their cloſe friends, ſuch a number of dependent Proteſtants as will out poll at a county election the public-ſpirited freeholders. In many counties of the ſouth, 30,000 male inhabitants have their repreſentatives named by about 1500 Proteſtants. When a man of fortune can procure one hundred poor Proteſtants to become his dependents, the political conſequence he derives from poſſeſſing one fifteenth of the county repreſentation, compenſates for the expenditure by which he obtains it. Add to this, the natural influence of ſuch a perſon with tenants, neighbours, and tradeſmen, and the power of providing for friends in the army, revenue, and ſubordinate public offices, it is not too much to ſay, that he will poſſeſs at his complete diſpoſal from one-third to one-fifth of the repreſentation of the county. If two or three of this order unite, even the ſhadow of popular choice is taken away. What muſt it then be, where the number of electors in the ſame extent of population does not amount to above three our four hundred? In fact, there are ſcarcely any popular nominations in Ireland. What is called the election, is but a ſeptennial lawſuit between a few great families, in order to aſcertain which of them ſhall, for ſeven years, enjoy the importance and patronage uſually attached to a ſeat in parliament. If there be truth in that aſſertion ſo often advanced, that public men do not conſult the public intereſt; if it is a correct explanation of that conduct, that the electors not being ſufficiently numerous, elections are not ſufficiently popular; that a very large proportion of them are independent of the people, and that this is a conſequence of the thraldom of the Catholics; the entire argument reſolves itſelf into this queſtion; can the emancipation of that body produce any inconvenience equal to that, which now ariſes from their unqualified diſfranchiſement? I addreſs myſelf to the com-

mon underſtanding of the age, not to its philoſophy or benevolence.

So obvious and eaſy is this remedy, that I am aſtoniſhed in the ſchemes of parliamentary reform repeatedly produced, it has been paſſed over in ſilence. We deſire that a new portion of health may be infuſed into the conſtitution, and neglecting the medicinal current that runs by our door, we ſeek a reſtorative from diſtant ſprings, and from the untried drug of every viſionary empiric. It is impoſſible not to obſerve with how much eaſe the Iriſh patriots have repeatedly ſate down to the work of reformation, no more adverting to the claims of their fellow citizens, than if ſuch men were not in exiſtence, or exiſted but as vagrant Tartars, who had been enticed by the cheerful face of the country to ſettle themſelves for a ſeaſon, ready at the return of ſummer to retire with equal precipitation.

In order completely to ſecure our moderate and happy government, it is expedient to reſtore every privilege to the Roman Catholics. How can any man call this country free, whilſt conſcience, the moſt ſacred of human rights, is reſtricted? I ſhall confine myſelf to that, which, pleading for the conſtitution, is moſt applicable. Reſtore to the Roman Catholics the privilege of voting for their repreſentatives; they never ought to have loſt it, for they never were the tools of power. The men of influence will by this act of juſtice be bound by intereſt to ſupport the conſtitution. To the other orders it is to be offered, as the reward of induſtry, as the enlivening principle which gives energy to active enterprize, which gives ſecurity to moderate means, becauſe it gives vigour to repel encroachment. Every Roman Catholic is not to be made a miniſter of ſtate, nor every inſolvent labourer to be taken into the firm of the conſtitution; but let every Iriſhman be taught, what every Engliſhman is taught to feel, that beſides want of application,

cation, or of œconomy, there is no impediment to bar him from the acquiſition of that protecting and recommendatory right, by which he is enabled to reſiſt the violence, to conciliate the regard, or to mollify the arrogance of his immediate ſuperior.

And this is the maſter grievance of Ireland, that there are ſo many temptations to oppreſs the tenant, and ſo few inducements to protect him. The advantages of government are not extended to the lower walks of humble life. The laws againſt Catholics (muſt I profane the ſacred name of law, by thus denominating that ſyſtem of brutal, bigotted, and tyrannizing monopoly,) produce the double miſchief of individual hardſhip, and general calamity; the operations of them, like that of their great prototype, the ancient foreſt laws, is to depopulate the country. We have given proofs of their baneful effects upon the conſtitution, that by limiting the number of electors, the baſis upon which freedom reſts, is injudiciouſly narrowed, and the means of corruption by conſequence facilitated. So far the evil recoils upon thoſe who uphold it; but the disfranchiſement of the great body of the Iriſh people retards the cultivation and natural improvement of the iſland. Such muſt ever be the effect of a government founded on partiality. Thoſe who are the objects of preference are not neceſſitated; the unfavoured part of the nation are not encouraged, to cultivate. This backwardneſs of the country will by ſome be imputed to indigenous indolence. But the vice of indolence is itſelf ſymptomatic of a bad government: it is notoriouſly cauſed in Ireland by the defective organization of ſociety; for the perſons who at home incur this imputation, when they emigrate, are indefatigable and induſtrious. It is the natural ambition of landed proprietors to ſeek an electioneering influence in their reſpective counties; they are dependent for

it upon their Proteſtant tenantry, and to them their cares and attentions are reſtricted. The remainder, who ought to conſtitute an uſeful body of huſbandmen, are not protected againſt the rapacity and inſolence of thoſe, whether of their own or of the other religions who are caſually placed over them. They are not induced to take an intereſt in the ſoil and to improve it. If they are ſo induced, they have not vigour of character to undertake the enterprize. They are dependent, becauſe they want every ſpecies of conſequence; and, becauſe dependent, they are neglected.* Look upon the chart of Ireland, and it will appear more conſpicuous, that this want of tone in the character of the Iriſh peaſantry, which in certain diſtricts is too obſervable, proceeds from the vexatious partiality encouraged by our ſtatutes. In thoſe parts of the north in which the inhabitants are almoſt entirely Proteſtants, there is little room, and no reaſon for preference. The people are comfortable and thrifty, and the country rather overſtocked with population. On the ſame ſoil, under the ſame climate, under apparently the ſame government, are to be found entire counties covered with ſpiritleſs wretches, naked, famiſhing, and who continually, by petty inſurrections, upbraid their miſery to their oppreſſors. It is true, that the law does not enjoin the evil; but law can ſo diſpoſe men's intereſt, as to produce miſchief without abſolutely ordaining it. The Roman Catholics are not now as they were a few years back, ſubject to that abſurd, impolitic, and capricious tyranny, which prohibited them to pro-

* To this rage for procuring county influence is to be attributed the uncultivated ſtate of many improveable tracts in Ireland. The landlord, willing to give that encouragement which authoriſes the expence and labour of reclaiming, wiſhes to ſelect thoſe who can ſecond his electioneering purpoſes. He in general will not receive Catholics, he cannot procure Proteſtants; under the dilemma, waſtes are ſuffered to remain, which might be rendered productive.

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ſecute their intereſt in their native country, or to depoſit the fruits of their induſtry in its boſom. But if no man will encourage them upon his eſtate, the moſt pernicious part of the old ſyſtem is continued, a negative is put upon the proſperity of the huſbandman and manufacturer.

It is not ſtated as a matter of national concern, whether any ſection of the country is tenanted by one or the other religion; but that the poor and uneducated are often called on to take oaths, which their conſcience reprehends, under penalty of forfeiting the means of ſubſiſtence. It is complained of as an injury to morals; it is complained of as an outrage on humanity. Unimpeached Catholic tenants are frequently ouſted from their farms, and ſupplanted by thoſe who are qualified to become freeholders. As yet there are but few manufacturers in Ireland; the cultivation of the ſoil is the principal occupation of the inhabitants. The perſons thus ejected, are ſent into the world adriſt and unprovided; driven to deſpair, they ſometimes commit acts of violence; the progreſs of civilization is checked, and the national character ſuffers. They in general retire to commence a new career of unprotected poverty, in thoſe barren tracts, which are as yet beneath the notice of their ſuperiors.* Not infrequently they ſeek an aſylum in the more hoſpitable wilderneſſes of America. And are not theſe objects of commiſeration? In the entire range of human calamity, of injuſtice, and oppreſſion, ſhall it be penal alone to plead the cauſe of the Iriſh Catholics? Shall the patriotiſm of Ireland be exhauſted in barren commendations of foreign freedom, while her ſons

* It is a well known fact, that in ſome places when country gentlemen have induced Proteſtant weavers, from the north, to ſettle as freeholders in the weſtern and ſouthern counties, they have abandoned their original occupation of manufacture, and never aſſumed the new one of huſbandry. Thus the nation loſes two active citizens; the farmer, who is forced from tillage, and the manufacturer who is forced into it.

proclaim

proclaim themſelves at home the inexorable patrons of domeſtic bondage? Is it a fiction that juſtice and benevolence are the characteriſtics of England? Or does ſhe travel round the globe to extend the benefit of theſe national virtues to Gentoos and Negroes, whilſt ſhe turns with averſion from the complaint of injured and unoffending brethren?

"Has ſhe a tongue to doom a brother's death?
"And ſhall that tongue give pardon to a ſlave?"

No; the people of England underſtand not our caſe, or our condition; when they do, we ſhall have them our auxiliaries.

Equal juſtice is not diſtributed to every order of Iriſhmen; in conſequence of the inducements to court the favour of one party, there is, with regard to thoſe who conſtitute the choſen caſt, a laxity in the execution of the criminal code, which aggrieves the entire community. It is needleſs to add, that laxity to the one implies, unequal rigour to the other. I allude here to the power which devolves upon private gentlemen, and that which is intruſted to ſubordinate magiſtrates. I impeach not the integrity of the Iriſh tribunals; but there are evils ariſing out of the manners and habits of a country, which thoſe who preſide over the adminiſtration of juſtice, be they ever ſo pure, cannot redreſs, or even diſcover; minute grievances, that wear down a gallant people. Nor, indeed, are the immediate inſtruments of the miſchief in an extreme degree culpable, the temptation is more than human nature is in general prepared to reſiſt. But, if Ireland is to be re-generated, theſe manners, habits, and intereſts muſt be deſtroyed, and every inducement to recur to them obliterated; until that event ſhall take place, the conſtitution will not regain its original purity.

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That alteration muſt in the firſt inſtance communicate ſome importance to thoſe who cultivate the ſoil, without doubt the moſt uſeful claſs of men in ſociety. If the Catholic poor are placed within the pale of the conſtitution, the cheerleſs wretches, who now deform the face of Ireland, will change rapidly to a bold yeomanry, the ornament and protection of their country. Such a phalanx exiſted before theſe ſtatutes for the devaſtation of Ireland had been fabricated. From hence another good conſequence is to be expected. There are at preſent, between the proprietor and occupier of the ſoil, a claſs of opulent men, of whom the wealth and induſtry are uſeleſs to their country. In proportion as the tertenant is encouraged by the landlord, perſons of this deſcription will retire into towns, and betake themſelves to commerce. Thus one ſtroke creates a yeoman, and recruits the commercial intereſt of the country.

And what is the advantage to be derived from ſo many hardſhips, and for which ſo many obvious benefits are to be neglected? If that code of deſolation, denominated the Popery laws, has any object beſides oppreſſion, it muſt be to extinguiſh the Catholic religion; and this, I venture to aſſert, would not alone be unproductive of any good, but muſt prove the cauſe of much poſitive miſchief to the country.

A man diveſted of partiality for any religious ſociety, conſidering the ſects of Chriſtianity, merely as they promoted political convenience, muſt adviſe the rulers of Ireland to cheriſh the Catholic religion. They ought to rejoice at the arrangement produced by accident. There are ſects of naked ſpeculation for thoſe who reflect. There is a religion of ſhow and obſervances for thoſe, of whom the devotion craves aſſiſtance from the ſenſes. He would recommend that all inducements to conformity might from the preſent hour be removed, and every man be per-

mitted to ſhape his creed by his own conviction. Intereſted conformity has been the bane of morals in this country. By that channel an annual current of irreligion is conveyed into the eſtabliſhment. A thinking man may change his opinion on points of doctrine; but the maſs of mankind are either occupied or uninſtructed; metaphyſical queſtions are beyond their comprehenſion, or they want leiſure for the diſcuſſion. Such men learn to deſpiſe, not to alter their tenets. The convulſion which wreſts from them their early prejudices, plunges them at once into irreligion; they become deiſts before they aſſume the name of Proteſtants. The preſent plan of proſelytiſm is infamous and deſtructive. Let us conſider the matter in another view, and examine whethey any uſeful end whatſoever is to be obtained by converting the people of Ireland to reformed epiſcopacy.

It will not be conſidered any indignity to the members of the dominant hierarchy, to aſſert, that, like every body of men who have been placed in ſimilar circumſtances, the affluence which they enjoy, and in many inſtances it is moſt deſervedly beſtowed, has proved injurious to their activity. They do not familiariſe themſelves with the people, they do not learn their language, they do not go amongſt them to convey inſtruction, and adminiſter ſpiritual comfort; all theſe eſſential duties devolve upon the Catholic clergy. Let me aſk the advocates for univerſal conformity, what is to become of the morals of the great body of their countrymen, when the bonds are ſevered which unite them to their preſent paſtors? Do they ſuppoſe, that the opulent dignitaries of the eſtabliſhment will interrupt, a tranquillity uſually elegant, and often lettered, to mingle with the wretches of the land, to inſtruct the cottage and conſole the cavern? If the poorer Roman Catholics conform, they will not be attended to; they muſt therefore either loſe

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their morals, or fall into ſome diſſenting congregations; and thus the great inconvenience, a double eſtabliſhment, is not remedied. The clergy of the church of Ireland are too rich to become ſedulous. They have, in general, been accuſtomed to conſider their livings as ſinecures, and the beggary of the nation would probably not be conſidered a very acceptable acquiſition. In proportion as they were alienated from the Church of Rome, the inhabitants of the weſtern and ſouthern parts of Ireland would become Preſbyterians, Methodiſts, or Arminians; and what is that higher order of virtue inculcated by the reformation, which, if uniformity is not to be procured, renders one ſpecies of diſſent more valuable than another.

Here, perhaps, the arrogant bigot will exclaim, that this reverence to religion, and attachment to the clergy, is mingled with ſuperſtition. It might be demonſtrated, that ſuperſtition belongs not to the Church of Rome, it is in every ſect the common foible of the weak and the illiterate; but let us wave diſcuſſion, and for an inſtant ſuppoſe the imputation founded. In the name of God, if trembling for his eternal allotment, awed by the terrors, and agitated by the perplexities of futurity, the anxious mind can procure a ſingle conſolation to repoſe on. Philoſophy, arrogant, and ſelf-opinionated, may ſmile; but why ſhould any perſon interfere to abridge the gratifications of unoffending credulity? Whilſt he interrupts not the harmony of ſociety, and the rights and convenience of his neighbour, is not every individual intitled to adopt that ſyſtem which ſeems moſt congenial to his mind, or thoſe practices, which are ſuggeſted by his fancy? *Deorum injuriæ, diis curæ.* If he errs, the thunder of heaven can avenge its cauſe, and proſtrate its victim; muſt the ſtorm be directed by an eccleſiaſtic, or a ſtateſman? If I ſeemed to receive a

ſupernatural injunction to haraſs my fellow creatures, for principles or practices not amounting to an overt act of injuſtice, I ſhould reject it as an illuſion of my ſenſes. The Almighty could not be at variance with infinite wiſdom, eternal juſtice and mercy, his eſſential attributes.

No deſcription of men in Ireland deſerve to rank higher in recompence from the ſtate, or eſtimation with the people, than the Roman Catholic clergy. To them is the nation indebted for the peaceable demeanor of an oppreſſed peaſantry. They have been commendably occupied in promoting morality among the lower ranks in all thoſe diſtricts, in which their religion is prevalent. They are, with few exceptions, men of exemplary conduct, and headed by prelates of accompliſhed minds and eſtimable virtues. A good government would cheriſh this deſerving order; a more enlightened people than we are, would receive them with reſpect and tenderneſs, not purſue them with an unmeaning ſneer and unmerited contumely. I know that excellent and uſeful body of citizens, and how unimportant ſoever my teſtimony, in this time of rebuke, they ſhall receive it. I have ſeen them, led by an irreſiſtible ſenſe of duty, brave every danger, and encounter every inconvenience, to adminiſter thoſe rites which cheer the dying wretch, and brighten to his mind the viſion of hereafter. I have ſeen them follow the ſummons of calamity, at night, amidſt the inclemency of the weather, over tracts of waſte and mountain, ſuch as affluence knows only from romance, when it would enhance its enjoyments by the contraſt of diſtreſs, and the luxury of commiſeration. It will, I believe, not be eaſy to find a ſociety of diſcerning men, unwilling to pronounce the Catholic clergy the beſt benefactors of Ireland, or of men of letters, who would look down upon that

catalogue in which the titular Biſhop of Waterford is included.*

Far be it from this eſſay to depreciate the merit of thoſe who have laboured to improve the conſtitution of Ireland. It is a common cauſe of congratulation that barriers are oppoſed to the incroachments of power; that the temptation of men in ſtation to act incorrectly is abridged, becauſe miſconduct is rendered difficult. But in the warmth of exultation, ſhall not thoſe who are excluded call upon the fortunate of their countrymen, and conjure them by the ſpirit that made them free, to compaſſionate the bondage of their brethren? Shall they not be told, that every invaſion of their rights, as it awakens the jealouſy of liberty, ought to excite tenderneſs for ſimilar violations? It may be ſaid that the demand is premature; can any time be premature for a great act of expedience and juſtice? Or can any period be leſs premature, than a ſeaſon of profound tranquillity, to reviſe our ſyſtem of government, and remove what the lapſe of years has left erroneous? What! if I am entitled to ſhoot game on any man's manor, I ſhall be tenacious of my right; the law will uphold me, and will preſerve me harmleſs in the extreme acts of violence, by which I may ſupport it. And here, when the ſtake is all a man of ſenſe and ſpirit can hold dear, are we to be put off with frivolous allegations? What circumſtance renders the preſent moment leſs eligible than a period of fifty years hence, to entertain this claim? and either to admit the demand, or advance ſatisfactory reaſons for the refuſal? The ſilent acquieſcence of the Roman Catholics is the

* I have ſelected Doctor Egan as an eminent, not a ſolitary inſtance of literary ſuperiority among the Catholic clergy of Ireland. I could recount numbers qualified to add luſtre to any rank, any order, or any country. Will this great and eſtimable perſon forgive this intruſion upon a retreat dignified by every virtue, and decorated by every learning?

ſtate ſecret, the only motive, and, indeed, the only juſtification for perſiſting in this ſyſtem; and until they can collect ſufficient reſolution, conſtitutionally to expreſs their feelings, and ſufficient unanimity to accompany the demand with all the influence, their money can beſtow, every period of redreſs will be unſeaſonable.

In the courſe of this diſcuſſion I have declined any interference with the abſtract claim of right, not abandoning the queſtion, but unwilling to agitate it, and aware that the principle may be diſtorted to ſubvert any government. It is demanded only for the Roman Catholics, that if not attainted of any crime (and I know not that they have been convicted) they be admitted to the benefit of that protection which is neceſſary to encourage enterpriſe, and give content to competence. That their induſtry, or the exerciſe of their talents, be not reſtricted; that property in their hands be not denied its natural influence; that they ſhould not, by a reiteration of wrongs, and falſe charges, be compelled, in fact, to adopt the principles imputed to them, and really to become the heinous delinquents they have been repreſented. In a nation which has been ſuddenly elevated from obſcurity by the merit of principle and public ſpirit, whilſt with few exceptions, the men are ſtill alive, who acted the principal part in that revolution; and amidſt the patriot bands, who gave energy to their exertions, muſt it be neceſſary to repeat, that a Roman Catholic, an honeſt man, paying taxes, and ſubmitting to the ordinances of the ſtate, is entitled to ſome conſideration in the ſcheme of freedom? In order to quicken theſe men to a common act of juſtice, muſt they be informed, that by the whimſical caprice of their laws, one or two ladies ſomewhat advanced in years, poſſeſs literally a greater ſhare of the repreſentation, than two thirds of their fellow citizens; men, denominated by a ſolemn act of the legiſlature, *his Majeſty's*

jeſty's dutiful and loyal ſubjects, the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

Is the conſtitution a barren tract, upon which they dread too thickly to inhabit? Is it therefore a waſte, becauſe they have ſuffered it to over-run with weeds and brambles? unproductive, becauſe they neglect to raiſe beyond a ſcanty ſuſtenance? Do they miſtake for the parſimony of nature, the deſolation cauſed by their own churliſh prohibition? Short-ſighted men! can they not perceive that to liberty, as to parent earth, the cultivator's toil is a grateful oblation, and rewarded with a ten-fold return of abundance? more liberal of her gifts, more profuſe of her enjoyments, according to the number and aſſiduity of thoſe who ſolicit them.

CHAP.

DECLARATION

OF THE

CATHOLIC SOCIETY

OF

DUBLIN.

Publiſhed in October, 1791.

* DECLARATION, &c.

DUBLIN, *October* 21, 1792.

IN the preſent enlightened and improving period of ſociety, it is not for the IRISH ROMAN CATHOLICS alone to continue ſilent. Not accuſed of any crime; not conſcious of any delinquency, they ſuffer a privation of rights and conveniencies, the penalty reſerved in wiſe ſtates for offences of atrocious magnitude. It does not become them, whilſt with liberality ever to be gratefully remembered, many deſcriptions of their fellow citizens compaſſionate their ſituation, to ſeem indifferent to the deſirable, and, they hope, not diſtant event of their emancipation. They wiſh to aſcertain upon what terms they may venture to ſettle in a country, which they love with the rational preference of men, not the ſimplicity of puerile acquieſcence. It is not for the IRISH CATHOLICS, armed as their cauſe is, with reaſon and juſtice, like public foes, to ſeek advantage from public calamity. They ought to advance their claim at a time moſt favourable to diſcuſſion, when the condition of the empire is flouriſhing and tranquil. They might ſeem culpable to their country, if, affecting to diſſemble what it were unmanly not to feel, they reſerved their pre-

* This paper was written by Mr. M'Kenna at the requeſt of a number of gentlemen, who united under the name of the Catholic Society of Dublin, it was unanimouſly adopted by the Society, as containing their political ſentiments, and publiſhed by them. From hence originated the very general diſcuſſion of the Roman Catholic queſtion in Ireland, which was terminated during the laſt (1793) ſeſſion of Parliament, by an extenſive conceſſion of political privileges to that people.

tenſions in ambuſcade, to augment the perplexities of ſome critical emergency. They ſhould be culpable to poſterity, if they omitted to profit of the general inclination of public ſentiment. They ſhould be culpable to themſelves, if they ſuffered an imputation to ſubſiſt, that in the extent of the Britiſh territory, they alone ſubmit without repining, to a mortifying and oppreſſive bondage, degrading to themſelves, and pernicious to their country. They conceive, that in the preſent ſtate of things, their ſilence might be received as evidence of ſuch diſpoſitions.

Influenced by theſe conſiderations, and inſtructed by a recent tranſaction,* that although laws may be ſhameful and prepoſterous, there is no ſecurity that they ſhall not be enforced; for even in a philoſophic age there will be bigots, and tyrants, where the votaries of freedom are moſt ſanguine; a number of Roman Catholics, reſident in Dublin, have formed themſelves into a ſociety, which they invite their fellow-ſufferers throughout the nation to unite with, which ſhall have for its object to conſider, and individually to ſupport with all their zeal and perſonal influence, ſuch meaſures, not inconſiſtent with their duty to the civil magiſtrate, as ſhall appear likely to relieve them, from the oppreſſions and diſqualifications impoſed in this country, on perſons profeſſing the Roman Catholic religion. We therefore do unanimouſly reſolve,

That we will, to the utmoſt of our power, endeavour by all legal and conſtitutional means, to procure the repeal of the laws by which we are aggrieved, as Roman Catholics. That we will promote repeated applications to every branch of the legiſlature for that purpoſe; and aſſiſt ſuch applications by all means of

* The reſolutions of the Co. Armagh grand jury for putting the law in force againſt Roman Catholics, who kept arms.

legal

legal influence, which it ſhall at any time be poſſible for us to exert.

It would be tedious, it might prove diſguſting, to recount each individual grievance under which we ſuffer. The Roman Catholics *ſeem preſerved in this land but as a ſource of revenue.* The whole legiſlative, the whole executive, the whole judicial powers of the ſtate, are in the hands of men over whom they have no controul, and with whom they can have little intercourſe. They are prohibited to engage in any mode of induſtry, from which it is poſſible to debar them, or which is worth the monopoly. They are reſtricted in the education of their children. As conſcientious men we cannot lightly abandon our religion; as prudent men we heſitate to engage in controverſial ſtudy: the wiſeſt have been bewildered in ſuch purſuits, and they are for the moſt part incompatible with our neceſſary occupations. Nor is any moral advantage held out, as an inducement to change our creed. It is not pretended that we ſhould become better men, or more dutiful ſubjects, but merely experimentaliſts in religion, ſeek to gratify their caprice, by forcing us from our habits of education, into the perplexing labyrinth of theology.

* *The liberty of Ireland to thoſe of our communion is a calamity,* and their misfortunes ſeem likely to

* A perſon who honoured the author by writing an anonymous and ſcurrilous pamphlet, replete with what probably he deemed perſonal inſults, propoſed a queſtion on this paragraph, "whether I thought the octennial bill an evil?" In anſwer, in the preſent (1792) ſtate of repreſentation in Ireland, it is a nuiſance; it incommodes the Catholics, without conferring eminent advantages upon the Proteſtants. Further, the people of Scotland, who have no ſort of interference with the election of members of parliament, are better circumſtanced than the people of Ireland, whoſe right of interference is limited to one race, and this not ſelected on account of property. The repreſentation of Scotland does not produce much good, but occaſions no miſchief. It will be ſaid that every man in England

to increaſe, as the country ſhall improve in proſperity and freedom. They may look with envy to the ſubjects of an arbitrary monarch, and contraſt that government, in which one great tyrant ravages the land, with the thouſand inferior deſpots, whom at every inſtant they muſt encounter. They have the buſtle and cumberſome forms, without the advantage of liberty. The octennial period, at which the delegated truſt of legiſlation is revoked, and his importance reſtored to the conſtituent, returns but to diſturb their tranquillity, and revive the recollection of their debaſement. All the activity, all the popular arts of electioneering canvas, enforce the idea of their inſignificance; they exemplify it too; witneſs the various preferences given by perſons of rank to, not always the moſt deſerving among our Proteſtant countrymen, a preference nearly as detrimental, to the independent Proteſtants as to us.

There exiſts not on our behalf any controul over power. We have felt the truth of this aſſertion, when in this age of toleration, even within the laſt eight years, ſeveral new penal ſtatutes have been enacted againſt us. We experience it daily, not alone in the great deliberations of the nation, but in the little concerns of minute diſtricts. Not alone in the levy of public money for the ſervice of the ſtate, but in the local impoſition of county and parochial taxes. We appeal to our rulers, we appeal to Ireland, we appeal to Europe, if we deſerve a place in ſociety, ſhould we ſeem willing to inſinuate that ſuch a ſituation is not ſeverely unacceptable?

is not repreſented. True; nor is it perhaps neceſſary that every man in Ireland ſhould be repreſented. But every man in England, if he chuſes to acquire property, may aſcend into the claſs of freeholders. In England, all men of the ſame rank are equal; there is not, as with us, grounds for compulſory partiality.

We

We are ſatisfied that the mere repeal of the laws againſt us will prove but feebly beneficial, unleſs the act be ſanctioned by the concurrence of our proteſtant brethren, and thoſe jealouſies removed by which the ſocial intercourſe of private life is interrupted. It is time we ſhould ceaſe to be diſtinct nations, forcibly encloſed within the limits of one iſland. It ſhall be a capital object of our inſtitution, to encourage the ſpirit of harmony, and ſentiments of affection, which the ties of common intereſt, and common country, ought, ere now, to have inſpired. Countrymen! too long have we ſuffered ourſelves to be oppoſed in rival factions to each other, the ſport of thoſe, who felt no tenderneſs for either. Why ſhould a diverſity of ſentiment, ſo uſual where the matter in debate is abſtruſe or important, ſeparate thoſe whom Heaven placed together for mutual benefit and conſolation? Objects, material in their day, produced hoſtility between our anceſtors. The cauſes of that diſcord have ceaſed to exiſt; let the enmity too periſh; let it be the duty of the preſent and of future ages to prevent the recurrence of ſuch unnatural and calamitous diſſenſion, except in the actual diſcharge of the religious duties, which conſcience renders inevitable, we wiſh that there never ſhall be found a trace of difference, which may poſſibly divide us into diſtinct communities.

The ill effects of theſe reſtrictions are not confined to thoſe of our religion; they extend to every individual, and every public body in the nation; under the weight of them induſtry is depreſſed; under their influence, public ſpirit is enervated. IT IS THE INTEREST OF EVERY MAN IN IRELAND, THAT THE ENTIRE CODE SHOULD BE ABOLISHED. It is the intereſt of the Crown, as it muſt promote the general happineſs of the ſubjects. It is the intereſt of the great, as it will ſerve to tranquillize the country,

and

and to encourage induſtry. It is the additional intereſt of the middle and inferior ranks, as it muſt impart new importance to their ſentiments, and to the expreſſion of their ſentiments: we call upon every order in the ſtate, not alone by their benevolence and juſtice, but by their patriotiſm and ſelf-intereſt to co-operate with our exertions.

It adds the inſult of mockery to the misfortune of the *Iriſh Catholics*, that the number of perſons aggrieved, in every other inſtance an inducement to redreſs, is a reaſon alledged to procraſtinate their relief, and an argument uſed to impoſe ſilence on their murmurs. Is it their act, that a multitude of Iriſhmen are aggregated by common grievance, and claſſed in one great community of fellow-ſufferers? Why accuſe them of hoſtility to the conſtitution? They earneſtly ſolicit to participate in its advantages. Why ſuſpect them of enmity to their Country? They deſire entirely to incorporate themſelves with it,—to contract cloſer ties, which ſhall decide them to conſign their poſterity irrevocably to its boſom. We envy not its endowments to the eſtabliſhed church; adverſity has inſtructed us, that all the conſolations which our religion promiſes, are moſt faithfully and tenderly adminiſtered by paſtors with moderate appointments, a free gift of gratitude to the kindeſt benefactors. Faſtidiouſly excluded from the conſtitution, we can pronounce on it but as aliens, by ſpeculation. We diſcern in it the means of much happineſs; we regret that its ſymmetry is not complete; a chaſm remains which might be filled with advantage by the ROMAN CATHOLICS; we have neither paſſion, nor intereſt, at variance with the order of things it profeſſes to eſtabliſh. We deſire only that property in our hands may have its natural weight, and merit in our children its rational encouragement. We have ſworn allegiance to our ſovereign, and the very evils we complain of, prove how in-

violable is our attachment to ſuch obligations. We reſpect the peerage, the ornament of the ſtate, and bulwark of the people; interpoſing, as we hope the *Iriſh Catholics* will experience, mediatory offices between authority and the objects of it. We ſolicit a ſhare of intereſt in the exiſtence of the commons. Dou you require an additional teſt? We offer one more unequivocal than a volume of abjurations. *We hope to be free, and will endeavour to be united.* Do you require new proofs of ſincerity? We ſtood by you in the exigencies of our country. We extend our hands, the pledge of cordiality. *Who is he that calls himſelf a friend to* IRELAND, *and will refuſe us?*

We feel ourſelves juſtified in this aſſociation: the period draws near, when it will befit the IRISH CATHOLICS to approach the legiſlature with reſpectful ſolicitation. It is meet that thoſe, who ſuffer, ſhould confer, in order to aſcertain the means and matter of redreſs, likely to prove at once ſatisfactory and ſucceſsful. It is inſinuated that ſome of our Proteſtant Brethren are adverſe to our emancipation; it is meet we ſhould inveſtigate the grounds of this ſtrange aſſertion. The laws that have ſeparated us from our countrymen, deſtroying our intercourſe with bodies conſtituted by authority, leave us no other manner to collect, or to convey the general ſenſe of our grievances, than this of a ſelf-created ſociety. We mean not to interfere with the harmony now happily ſubſiſting through the nation: if the applications on our behalf are complied with, we can never have occaſion; if rejected, we cannot have an intereſt to interrupt it. Engaged for the moſt part, in the various departments of commerce, we are concerned no leſs than any other claſs of citizens, to cultivate the bleſſings of tranquillity; individually we have more at ſtake than ſome, who preſume to falſify our motives, and calumniate our actions. The ROMAN CATHOLIC body

body meaſured ſtrength with the power of the ſtate and was vanquiſhed, when it poſſeſſed a force that never more can be exerted, and was oppoſed to enemies far leſs numerous than now it ſhould encounter. The confiſcations of that period are confirmed to the preſent occupiers by immemorial poſſeſſion, by the utter impoſſibility of aſcertaining the original proprietors, by the perſonal and pecuniary intereſt of almoſt every Roman Catholic in the land to maintain the ſettlement. Many of our communion already have, and ſtill more are likely to expend their property on titles derived under theſe forfeitures. It is not from the wealthy, attached to their preſent enjoyment, that commotion is to be apprehended. It is not from the induſtrious, a ſingle year of anarchy muſt prove fatal to their competence. It is not from the poor, a wretched band of ſlaves, mouldering under theſe bad laws, and only made uſe of to degrade the *Iriſh Catholics* to a rabble, when it is convenient to deſpiſe them. We are willing to forget that any beſides the preſent race ever exiſted in this iſland. We have long been willing to forget it, if our recollection were not kept alive by what we ſuffer, and by the celebration of feſtivals, memorable only as they denote the æra and the events from whence we date our bondage.

We will endeavour by temperate, but unremitting aſſiduity, to procure the benefit of that conſtitution which, of all our fellow ſubjects, is denied alone to thoſe of our perſuaſion. We are amenable to all the decrees of the ſtate; we contribute to all its exigencies; we are ſtill to be informed upon what ground its advantages are made a monopoly to our excluſion. We challenge an inveſtigation of our principles and conduct, we feel not in ourſelves, we know not that there is in our brethren, a deficiency of manly ſpirit, of capacity or virtue, which ought to aſſign to the *Iriſh*

Roman

Roman Catholics an inferior rank among the creatures of our common father. If we have a crime, it is to have ſlept over our chains; our cauſe is the cauſe of juſtice and our country. We ſolicit counſel and aſſiſtance from all to whom theſe ſacred names do not preſent themſelves unheeded.

To the patronage of the lettered we particularly recommend ourſelves: where talents have ariſen among us, they have been compelled to ſeek refuge in a foreign country, or they have periſhed in their infancy, robbed of the hope that animates, curtailed of the education that invigorates them. We claim as of right the benefit of open trial and candid diſcuſſion; even amidſt the cares of legiſlating for an extenſive empire, the Britiſh ſenate did not refuſe its attention to the unfortunate exiles of Africa. If in this enlightened age it is ſtill our doom to ſuffer, we ſubmit; but at leaſt let us learn what imputation of crimes can inſtigate, or what motives of expediency can account for the denunciation of that heavy judgement. That if loyalty, which ſtrong temptations could never alienate; if exemplary good conduct under the moſt trying circumſtances; if reverence to a conſtitution, which in our native land we are forbidden to approach, be inſufficient to remove unjuſt aſperſions, and entitle us to the kindneſs and confidence of our brethren; we may be at leaſt inſtructed how we ſhould atone for what we cannot deem inexpiable,—*The political errors, or misfortunes of our anceſtors.*

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION

OF

Conſtitutional Intereſts, &c.

Publiſhed in May, 1792.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION

OF

Constitutional Interests, &c.

PREFACE, &c.

THIS tribute to a cauſe, in which the author has, from an early period of life, been zealous, was publiſhed in the beginning of the laſt year. A new edition having been requeſted, he has added many arguments, which ſince occurred, and omitted, particularly in the introduction, a reference to circumſtances, which now are become obſolete. It was at that time dedicated to an illuſtrious public character. To ſome the dedication appeared adulatory; in the opinion of others, it implied cenſure; deſirous to avoid the vice and indecorum, it has not been re-printed.

The principles, here delivered, are ſimilar to thoſe which appeared in the declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin, the firſt Iriſhmen of that perſuaſion who ventured for a century paſt to look their political ſituation in the face, and to inquire, by what pretence, it could be juſtified? Whilſt at the entrance of every walk in life, ruffian monopoly was ſtationed to intercept their progreſs, he who did not repine muſt have wanted the common feelings of humanity. It had been inculcated to the Catholics, and with too much ſucceſs, that not only to ſuffer was their lot, but to ſuffer without a murmur. From the deſpotiſm of this oriental maxim, the members of that ſociety firſt emancipated their underſtandings. They dared to addreſs their countrymen on the ſubject of their grievances; and having,

having, at their requeſt, prepared that appeal to the juſtice of the Iriſh nation, I found that I had only given expreſſion to ſentiments, which were common to every individual.

The propoſitions, which form the declaration, were in general extracted from the former edition of this eſſay. I have cauſed it to be annexed, that it may aſſiſt the reaſoning, and ſpeak its own vindication. During a conſiderable part of the laſt winter that paper, and the author of it, were targets for the aſſault of every man deſirous to ſignaliſe his zeal or literary proweſs. Some gentlemen, probably in the conſciouſneſs of ſuperior ſagacity, applauded the compoſition, whilſt they lamented and cenſured the miſguided ſimpleton, who framed it. Others, leſs indulgent, conſigned manner, matter, and author to that univerſal obloquy prepared in Ireland to receive whatever the touch of Popery contaminates. Theſe antagoniſts ſeeming to find a tower of ſtrength in the fanatic outcry againſt Papiſts, rejected the leſs neceſſary auxiliary of argument. One writer amuſed himſelf with miſrepreſentation, enlivened by malignity. That my name ſhould have been combined with the cauſe of the Iriſh Catholics, and made a ſubject of common invective, was a compliment, for which this anonymous libeller has my ſincere acknowledgements. I cannot, indeed, avoid expreſſing the triumph of a partiſan, when I conſider the mode of attack in general adopted. He who is ſatisfied that juſtice favours him, ſeldom reſorts to malice, and diſdains to ſtoop to the meanneſs of miſrepreſentation, either proves but peeviſh tenacity in a bad cauſe, which admits of no more valid apology. As all the decorums, obſerved in liberal life, have in the courſe of this diſcuſſion been neglected, it may well be concluded, that the dearth of arguments proceeded from the want of any rational grounds of defence, not ſurely from any reluctance to produce them.

The

The republication of this pamphlet will ſerve to juſtify what has beem impeached, and to illuſtrate what appeared obſcure in the Declaration. I know not, that any more concluſive evidence can be offered to manifeſt the abſurdity of the Popery laws, than that the abettors of them ſhun the light; fair diſcuſſion is eluded; arguments oppoſed by vague declamation; and where they are irreſiſtible, ſtigmatiſed with the epithet of ſedition. Thus have the perſons intereſted in the ſubſerviency of the Iriſh Catholics endeavoured to alarm the cautious, and to deceive the unwary, imputing principles the very contraſt of what exiſted in the minds of thoſe to whom they were attributed. Having entered at large into the queſtion, I may be excuſed the drudgery of perſonal altercation with thoſe who have ſelected me for the object of their animadverſion. Under the different heads they will find their reſpective objections conſidered. I muſt confeſs with reluctance, that the ſpeeches, pronounced in Parliament upon the diſcuſſion of this ſubject, excited in my mind rather a ſenſation of ridicule. Perhaps no occaſion ever exhibited a more pitiable picture of common ſenſe, borne down by prejudice, and ſtifled by ſelf-intereſt. What is that logic, which defining all the orders, of which a free conſtitution * ought to exiſt, can find no admiſſion

* In the courſe of this memorable debate, one gentleman is ſaid to have declared that Ireland could not be free or happy, unleſs the conſtitution conſiſted of Proteſtant King, Parliament, and Conſtituents; another wiſhed to add a Proteſtant bar; a third (and Parliament agreed with him) was of opinion that Proteſtantiſm was not ſafe, if permiſſion ſhould be granted to promote a phyſician of merit to a medical profeſſorſhip. So much is common ſenſe at variance with the politics of Ireland. I am willing to believe that many of the members of Parliament, who have thus diſmiſſed the Catholic queſtion, have not conſidered the diſfranchiſement of that people in all its conſequences. If they had, they muſt perceive that more evil ariſes from

miſſion for the great body of the people? If Proteſtant conſtituents alone muſt controul the ſtate, they alone ought to bear the burden of its expences. But theſe ſtrange doctrines are not delivered alone from the preſs and in Parliament. In private converſation, it ſeems to be aſſumed, that the man who believes tranſubſtantiation, and admits the ſpiritual ſupremacy of the Pope, ought of courſe to be the vaſſal of thoſe who hold a creed not quite ſo comprehenſive. Every conceſſion to the Catholics is repreſented a free gift of benevolence; it is deemed arrogant in the extreme, that the members of that communion ſhould pretend a title to any franchiſes. To one who does not conſider the laws againſt Papiſts, more reſpectable than the laws againſt witches, the doctrine is extremely novel. We are taught that in civiliſed ſociety, every man is entitled to employ his talents, in whatever honourable path of advancement pleaſes him moſt, and make of his property ſuch diſpoſal as he ſhall think expedient. When I hear, that a century of the moſt exemplary good conduct, was the price, paid by the Iriſh Catholics, for licence to buy land with their own money, it appears to me, that right and favour are confounded in a manner not leſs prepoſterous, than by the exactions of our Edwards and Henrys, when they levied an hundred hens from a lady for permiſſion to ſee her huſband.

Seeking for political information in ancient and modern writers, I could never diſcover proofs, that a man's creed ought to regulate his ſituation in civil ſociety. Mr. Locke attributes certain tenets to the Catholics, which he thinks may be puniſhed by diſqualifications. But yet Mr. Locke does not inſinuate, that under pretence of theſe ill-founded imputations, an entire nation ſhould be diſfranchiſed.

from their favourite aſcendancy, than could enſue if it were poſſible to erect a Catholic eſtabliſhment in Ireland.

Every line of that great man's works eſtabliſh a contrary principle. We will proceed beyond Mr. Locke; the opinions, he cites, deſerve the moſt ſevere animadverſion of the magiſtrate, they are inconſiſtent with the exiſtence of civiliſed life, and he who holds them ſhould be retrenched from ſociety. But as they belong not to the Iriſh, nor to any other Catholics, his exception is inapplicable.

My mind is faſhioned ſo differently from thoſe of the gentlemen who have ſeen treaſon, ſedition, libel, and what is called levelling principles in the declaration of the Catholic Society, that I am at a loſs how I ſhould argue with them. We do not ſeem to entertain common ideas, nor, do I believe, the terms we uſe bear a common import.' Parental predilection may deceive an author, but to me that paper ſeems to convey a panegyric on the the Britiſh conſtitution, and a modeſt expoſtulation with thoſe, who withhold the benefits of it from the Iriſh Catholics. The reaſoning of it is founded, not on principles of natural equality, but upon that right of civil and political liberty, which the Britiſh conſtitution holds out to Britiſh ſubjects. Franchiſe in England is the creature of property, and belongs to every man who chuſes to acquire it. In Ireland, it is the reward of a particular mode of faith, often of a pliable or ſubſervient conſcience.* It is with us a weapon of aſſault; in Great Britain, a ſhield againſt oppreſſion. We complained, indeed, but it was of abuſes, perverſions of Britiſh principles, which diſcriminated us unjuſtly from our fellow citizens. We complained, but it was of the privation of thoſe franchiſes, which render the condition of a Briton, the moſt enviable upon earth, and which elevate the throne upon the bleſſings of

* This cauſe of complaint has been removed by the act of 1793.

a contented people. We loved our country, not its infatuation. We revered the conſtitution, not its blemiſhes. We admire that conſtitution with too much truth, to be content with the caricature of it, which was exhibited in Ireland for adoration. Such were the ſentiments of the gentlemen who did me the honour to uſe my words in expreſſing our common feelings. If that be ſedition againſt rational liberty, we were betrayed into the error by Locke, by Somers, by Monteſquieu and Blackſtone. If it be ſeditious, it is the ſedition of parliament itſelf, the ſedition of the bill of rights, the ſedition of the Engliſh, and of the Iriſh Revolutions.

But it ſeems, that to have called the public attention to the claim of the Roman Catholics, was an offence of enormous magnitude; if ſo, I acknowledge no ordinary ſhare in the guilt, and yet continue impenitent. The general circulation of the publication often mentioned, contributed not a little to direct the public mind to the great national object it diſcuſſes. When a perſon reſolved never to conform to the eſtabliſhed church, declares himſelf contented in the condition of an Iriſh Catholic, I heſitate which I ſhould principally doubt, his good ſenſe, his ſpirit, or veracity.* Thoſe may be ſatisfied, whoſe lot in life ſuperſedes the neceſſity of exertions; thoſe may ſubmit, who want energy to make them. This acquieſcence cannot be expected from the many who writhe under the preſſure of the penal laws; who have met them in the outſet of life barricading each favourite path, and who ſtill meet them, inſuperable impediments. The load is intolerable; the monopoly has been overſtrained. They are not men who do not deſire relief. They are not

* All this muſt be underſtood as having been applied to the ſtate of the Roman Catholics, previous to Lord Hobart's act in 1793.

rational beings who do not endeavour to obtain it. I know but of two expedients which poſſibly can be uſed; force and argument; and thoſe I ſhould imagine give the moſt unqueſtionable evidence of their regard for the conſtitution, and good diſpoſitions to their fellow citizens, who adopting the latter method, ingenuouſly avow that they feel their ſituation, and throw themſelves for redreſs upon the returning reaſon of their infatuated countrymen. We have been charged with confederacies of requiſition, ſuch aſſociations have been formed; but we were compelled to adopt them by confederacies of refuſal. For fourteen years had the Iriſh Catholics looked, with ſilent expectation, for that progreſſive emancipation, which few are ſo hardy as utterly to deny to them. They not only expected in vain the profeſſion of the law; for that pittance of the conſtitutional rights of three millions of loyal Iriſhmen, would then have given ſatisfaction; but ſaw themſelves introduced as a matter of courſe into every diſqualifying ſtatute. They were treated by Parliament, with not ſo much reſpect as herrings, and rather leſs attention than game and greyhounds. Two modeſt applications, in the year 1791, were received with coldneſs. Oppoſition and adminiſtration ſhrunk equally from the cauſe. But we were not permitted to remain in a ſtate of ſuffering neutrality. In the county of Armagh * an abſurd law was revived, which the temper of the times encouraged us to believe obſolete. Thus provoked, ſeveral Catholics did aſſociate, and thought it adviſeable to bring their condition by ſolemn appeal before the tribunal of the public. Nor do I conceive that any perſon claiming to be their friend, can cenſure this liberal diſcuſſion of

* A reſolution entered into, ſummer aſſizes, 1791, by the grand jury of that county, for putting the law in force againſt Papiſts who poſſeſſed fire arms.

their pretenſions. He ſhould rather rejoice, that proſelytes were won to the cauſe he had eſpouſed, and arguments furniſhed to juſtify or to aſſiſt him. I do not find that thoſe, who in the Engliſh Parliament promoted the abolition of the ſlave trade, vehemently diſapproved of the publications, by which the people of England were prevailed on to co-operate in erecting that eternal monument to the benevolence of Britain. Nor is it cuſtomary that the political leaders in either parliament ſhould diſcountenance thoſe literary exertions, by which their favourite meaſures are recommended.

I have endeavoured to enter at large into this ſubject, to place it in the light, (ſuch, indeed, it ever has appeared to me) not of a party queſtion, in which one claſs alone is intereſted, but of a great national concern, and involving the fate not of the Catholics, but of Ireland. I have endeavoured to prove that nothing leſs than a miracle could enable the Catholics to ſubvert the preſent eſtabliſhment, and ſubſtitute their own religion on its ruin. If that propoſition be eſtabliſhed, the penal code muſt appear a ſyſtem of cauſeleſs rigour. National honour, and national juſtice, will call alike for its abolition. On this ground it would be a duty, but I have endeavoured to prove it the intereſt of the Iriſh, to aboliſh theſe ſtatutes. I have advanced, and ſought by arguments to ſubſtantiate my aſſertion, that the evils which are complained of in our conſtitution, proceed from the diſfranchiſement of the Catholics. That no effectual reſtraint can ever be oppoſed, unleſs the entire nation be admitted into a participation of common right, limited only by that pecuniary qualification which may operate as a bounty upon induſtry. To the real Engliſh Conſtitution I never do, or can allude to, but with panegyric. If not the

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beſt poſſible, it ſeems the beſt practical ſyſtem, and admirably ſuited to the ſtate of ſociety in theſe iſlands. It provides an outlet for influence, a reſting place for pride, an avenue for ambition. Thus combining the moſt dangerous paſſions, for the ſupport, not as might be expected, the deſtruction of liberty.

T. M'K.

May 5th, 1792.

DECLARATION

OF

POLITICAL SENTIMENTS

Published by the

ROMAN CATHOLICS,

OF THE

CITY AND VICINITY

OF

WATERFORD,

IN ANSWER TO THE

Resolutions entered into by the different Grand Juries, at the Summer Assizes, 1792.

A

DECLARATION

OF

POLITICAL SENTIMENTS

Published by the

ROMAN CATHOLICS,

OF THE

CITY AND VICINITY

OF

WATERFORD,

IN ANSWER TO THE

A

DECLARATION, &c.

WATERFORD, *Sept.* 22, 1793.

WE, THE CATHOLICS OF THE CITY OF WATERFORD, obſerving that a jealouſy of the views and intentions of our body is induſtriouſly excited, think it incumbent on us to ſatisfy our fellow citizens, by a public avowal of our ſentiments.

We reflect with ſatisfaction, that, in this part of the kingdom, a perfectly amicable intercourſe has long ſubſiſted between the members of the different religious perſuaſions: it is our firſt wiſh, and will be our greateſt happineſs, to preſerve that harmony; and, we truſt, it is too firmly eſtabliſhed to be interrupted by the calumnies of intereſted men, who endeavour to alienate from us the confidence of our Proteſtant brethren.

Deſirous not to furniſh additional matter for diſguſt to the leſs reflecting part of our communion, we paſs haſtily over thoſe ſingular publications which fill the newſpapers, and which, repreſenting this tranquil nation as on the eve of confuſion, are likely to affect our credit as a commercial, and our reputation as an enlightened people. We regret that among the names of the unthinking men, who expoſe our country to theſe

inconveniencies, ſome appear whoſe ſignatures ſhould be reſerved for more honourable purpoſes; and that the bigotry and ſelfiſh intolerance which have been manifeſted on this occaſion, exhibit to foreigners the picture of imperfect civilization.

A predilection for Monarchical Government has ever diſtinguiſhed the Iriſh Catholics. To the auguſt Houſe of Hanover we are bound by the double ties of allegiance and gratitude; in its illuſtrious repreſentative on the throne, we acknowledge the double character of ſovereign and benefactor. We conſider the connection with Great Britain a ſtate natural to this iſland, productive of great good, and peculiarly advantageous to our body: to uphold this connection, to maintain the dignity and prerogatives of this family, we reſerve the tender of our lives and fortunes. Theſe great and material intereſts of our country are worthy of the ſacrifice; not the frivolous pretexts upon which, of late, ſuch engagements have been adopted.

We contemplate with ſincere happineſs the bleſſings enjoyed by our fellow ſubjects, which, in ſome degree, extend to us, under that improved condition of ſociety—a mixed monarchy—a fortunate and wiſe medium between the evils of deſpotic power and the deplorable anarchy of popular interference. Admiring this enviable organization, and attached to each of its component parts—the crown, the peerage, and the repreſentation—we are ambitious to be incorporated with the conſtitution of which we approve, to be naturaliſed in our native land, under the government which we maintain without repining.

We deſire, above all things, to preſerve the peace of Ireland, to cement the cordiality of the aſſociated kingdoms, and to cultivate the welfare of the empire. Without inveſtigating the motives which might have induced a former legiſlature to

ſuſpend

ſuſpend us from the exerciſe of the elective franchiſe, we contend that the continuance of that ſevere, diſgraceful, and unnatural reſtriction, is not neceſſary. We are ſolicitous to be reſtored to the capacity of becoming electors, according as we ſhall attain that qualification of freehold property, which the law of the land preſcribes to our fellow ſubjects. We ſeek no indefinite rights. We promulgate no untried ſyſtem. We only pray to be re-inſtated in that condition, which, at the Revolution, was guaranteed to our anceſtors, and which, during the reign of King William, was deemed ſufficient to ſecure the Proteſtant eſtabliſhment—the degree of liberal indulgence which it is found politic and ſafe to concede to all other diſſenters. Here we reſt our humble ſuit, to our ſovereign and to our country; and we have every reaſon to be ſatisfied that ſuch is the univerſal ſenſe of our brethren.

We have been accuſed of a deſign to overawe and to intimidate—a ſlanderous and malevolent imputation, unſupported by evidence, or even by any grounds for remote ſuſpicion. The pretenſions which we advance are in the legal and parliamentary form; our ſolicitude is regulated by deference to the exiſting laws, and a cautious attention to the repoſe of that country to which we are bound by relationſhip and property. We neither hope nor expect relief but from the wiſdom of the legiſlature. When we deviate from this rule, may the united energy of the empire avenge the delinquency! Conſcious of our integrity, obſerving throughout the vaſt maſs of our perſuaſion, an uniformity of peaceable and lawful conduct, we heſitate whether we ſhould more admire the audacity of thoſe who advance, or the credulity of thoſe who believe, that the humble application of the Catholics, to be reſtored to the privileges of freeholders, is ſeditious. That even to diſcuſs the queſ-

tion forebodes evil to Ireland, and affords cauſe of alarm to our Proteſtant brethren—prepoſterous aſſertion in a free country! of which the conſtitution not only permits, but enjoins the ſubject to make known his grievances.

If there be in Ireland a propenſity to commotion, it muſt exiſt among thoſe who ſeek to drive us to deſperation, attempting to preclude for ever our hope of being relieved from what we cannot but regard as hardſhips. We reject with abhorrence the idea; and we obſerve, throughout our entire body, a ſimilar reſignation to the ſovereign authority.

If there be ſedition, let it be ſought for amongſt thoſe perſons who, miſrepreſenting the intentions of good citizens and good ſubjects, endeavour to perpetuate the worſt of calamities—religious animoſity; let it be ſought for amongſt thoſe who erect themſelves into unauthoriſed legiſlatures, and prejudge a queſtion which is only cognizable in Parliament; who confederate to limit the bounty of the ſupreme power; who threaten to reſiſt the operations of its wiſdom; who deny that it is competent to every act of legiſlation—a doctrine equally falſe and dangerous in a ſettled country. We have ſeen theſe menaces, but we overlook them; nor was it by means of us or of our brethren, that the alarming poſſibility of overawing the legiſlature was introduced into popular diſcuſſion.

The progreſſive proſperity of Ireland has been co-equal with the removal of the laws againſt us. Reaſon and experience teach us to aſcribe it to this cauſe, and to foretell that the nation muſt flouriſh in proportion as the privileges of equitable and rational liberty are diffuſed among its inhabitants. Holding in view this great improvement of our condition, and that of our country, we rejoice that our pretenſions have been ſubmitted to the public; and we cordially thank the illuſtrious patriots who have

have vindicated our cauſe in Parliament, and demonſtrated the expediency of relieving us.

Thus moderate in our ſentiments, but inflexible in our determination, we will ſeek, in union with our aggrieved brethren, from the wiſdom of Parliament, the generoſity of our King, and the benevolence of our Proteſtant countrymen, the redreſs which common ſenſe, ſuperior to ſophiſtry, tells us we merit. Whilſt we live, we will perſevere in applications loyal, humble, peaceable, and unremitting; and we will inculcate to our children, by precept and example, to imitate our conduct.

Signed by the principal Roman Catholics of the city and vicinity of Waterford.

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

TO THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS

OF

IRELAND,

Relative to the

Proceedings during the Summer of 1792,

AND ON THE

MEANS AND PRACTICABILITY

OF A

TRANQUIL EMANCIPATION.

Published originally in October, 1792.

AN

ADDRESS, &c.

THE influence, which the conſtituent enjoys over the repreſentative body, is an eſſential advantage of our conſtitution, to which every other is ſubordinate. From this the Roman Catholics are univerſally and indefinitely excluded. In preference to all things elſe, they ought to ſeek the removal of this incapacity. Let them ſeek it with temper, with perſeverance, and with unanimity; if their ſucceſs be not immediate, it inevitably muſt take place at a period not far diſtant.

It is not the object of this eſſay to ſuggeſt a change in the conſtitution of Ireland; we live under a wiſe and fortunate organization of ſociety. It does not recommend a novel project to amuſe the ſpeculative, or diſtract the induſtrious. The excluſion of the Iriſh Catholics from the right of voting for their repreſentatives, is not ſanctioned by the preſcription of ſeventy years. He, who propoſes to reſtore a privilege, of which the exerciſe has been only ſuſpended during that ſhort interval, cannot, with juſtice, be accuſed of innovation or experiment.

Still leſs do I inſinuate that violence ought to be employed, or is likely to prove efficacious. Few political benefits are of ſufficient value to be purchaſed by commotion. I ſhall demonſtrate hereafter, that nothing would be ſo likely to extinguiſh our hopes for ever, as the ſubſtitution of our natural ſtrength for our political influence. Neither the talents nor the weight poſſeſſed by the Roman Catholic community are inconſiderable; if they concentrate the latter, and bring the former to bear upon the queſtion, ſupported by every principle of juſtice, and rule of policy, it will not be poſſible to refuſe them a participation in the advantages of rational liberty.

Far be it from me to ſuppoſe that the cauſe of a great people depends for ſucceſs upon the interpoſition of any one, or any few individuals, be their ſituation ever ſo elevated. The magnitude of the Roman Catholic queſtion muſt preſs itſelf forward in this kingdom. But ſtill the co-operation of the moſt eminent of our perſuaſion would be valuable. It were ridiculous to imagine that they do not earneſtly deſire the abolition of the laws, which proſcribe their religion. I have no authority to aſſert, but I have good grounds to believe, that they would not be reluctant to engage in the conſtitutional purſuit of the privilege of ſuffrage. If they ſtand aloof in paſſive acquieſcence, it is, that the meaſures of our body appear to them to be conducted, with a degree of ſuperfluous buſtle, of which the tendency is not eaſily diſcernible. It is the deſign of this publication to repreſent the practicability of a *tranquil emancipation*, and to intereſt in the ſupport of it thoſe, who have hitherto appeared neuter.

Parliament is provided by the Britiſh conſtitution, as the natural reſort of the ſubject, in which he ſhall expoſe, and ſeek redreſs of his grievances. An appeal to this tribunal bears no ſingularity

larity on the face of it. If the law of the land interfered in any other manner with our happineſs or property, we ſhould alike remonſtrate. I do not ſee wherefore the proceeding ought to be more ſeriouſly conſidered, than any other litigation in the ordinary courts of juſtice.

By the fundamental principles of the ſame conſtitution, the privilege of voting for repreſentatives is a property, and accrues in conſequence of the poſſeſſion of a freehold, as naturally as the dominion over the timber, which the eſtate produces. If a capricious act of parliament prohibited any deſcription of proprietors from cutting down the timber upon their eſtates, it could not be pronounced extraordinary by any reaſonable man, that they ſhould ſolicit a repeal of the ſtatute, and ſupport the ſuit with their united influence. The caſe before us is exactly parallel.

I enter into this definition of the claim of the Catholics, becauſe in the arguments on either ſide, it has often been confounded with numerical repreſentation. It is immaterial to the preſent diſcuſſion, whether that ſpecies of political inſtitution be wiſe or vicious. It is not connected with the demand we make upon our country. The Catholics have never ſought that the members of their body ſhould be created electors by act of parliament, but that the capacity to become electors according to the ordinary forms of the conſtitution be reſtored to their perſons; that the privilege of being repreſented be re-annexed to their freeholds. This pretenſion has been preciſely expreſſed in the addreſs of the Catholics of Waterford to the nation, a paper which has been generally well received by the members of that communion.

A queſtion here challenges notice, which has been agitated among the Catholics themſelves, and which furniſhes a pretext of diſſent to a ſmall minority at Belfaſt, the town, moſt conſpicuous in

Ireland by the ſuperior information, public ſpirit, and liberality of its citizens, and elevated far, indeed, beyond my panegyric. The importance of the acquiſition is urged to deter us from making the privilege of ſuffrage our immediate claim. We are adviſed to commence by theſe requiſitions, which may be conceded with moſt facility, becauſe upon theſe articles, it is ſuppoſed, that the ſpirit of Proteſtant oppoſition is leſs vehement. Whilſt engaged in the purſuit of the greateſt good, we ſhould not abſolutely reject a leſſer. But as our condition can never be comfortable, until we ſhall be created citizens of the country, we ought to fix a ſteady eye upon this point, and direct thither the entire force of our expectations and activity.

I ſuppoſe that there is not in Ireland a Roman Catholic, who does not earneſtly deſire an equalization of franchiſes. It would have been at any time a deſpicable artifice to have diſſembled that laudable and natural ambition: from the notoriety of our hopes, our ſentiments, and our exertions, it would be at preſent impracticable. As the leſſer conceſſion is but a gradation to the greater, every man, who deſires to oppoſe us, will, if we divide our queſtion, make a ſtand at each article, and conteſt it with a degree of pertinacity, not proportionate to the object itſelf, but to that more important conceſſion, which is ultimately involved in it. If we ſolicit gradatim, we ſhall be liable at each ſtep to the imputation of inſatiability and ingratitude. Gentlemen have ſaid laſt winter that they had never conſidered the queſtion of ſuffrage: if it were permitted to lie dormant for a century, the ſame apology would be offered to poſterity. Until it be placed ſo fully before them, that they cannot turn aſide from the diſcuſſion, it never will be in the contemplation of perſons, who have no inducement to revolve the matter in their minds,

and

and a great many reaſons of intereſt not to comply with it.

I further object to this progreſſive requiſition, becauſe it muſt diſguſt every man of ſpirit; and whilſt it alienates thoſe, of whom the aid is moſt deſirable, gives leiſure, courage, and deciſion to our enemies. Whilſt our demands are at the higheſt, our opponents will occaſionally endeavour to compromiſe; let the ſmalleſt favour be the prayer of our petition—even that will be reſiſted as innovation. I ſpeak from experience. In 1792 we aſked elective franchiſe, and obtained the law profeſſions. In 1783 we entreated that Roman Catholics might be eligible to the ſix medical profeſſorſhips then erected; the propoſal was reſiſted with not leſs vehemence, than if we demanded the Primacy for a Popiſh patriarch. I obſerve alſo, that during the period of our moſt reſpectful acquieſcence, not only we were not complimented, but new penalties were * enacted; I therefore conclude that we are conſiderable loſers by paſſive expectation.

The obſtacle to our emancipation in this view is the prejudice of certain Proteſtants, and ſome wild, nonſenſical theory, which ſuppoſes that we are not competent to enjoy the advantages of liberty; that it is criminal to be a Catholic, and dangerous to truſt us. I will not condeſcend to appropriate a line to the refutation of theſe abſurdities; the authors and ſupporters of ſuch rhapſody (at leaſt ſuch of them as are ſerious) deſerve Bedlam. But nothing can be more prepoſterous than ſo far to comply with theſe ſilly chimeras, as by any

* The chief of theſe were the excluſion from the direction of the bank, from the ſchool of phyſic, different clauſes relative to the poſſeſſors of fire arms, a privation of the right of voting at veſtries, &c. &c. See the Digeſt of the Popery Laws, ſaid to have been prepared under the inſpection of the Hon. Mr. Butler.

means

means to include them in our conſideration; by yielding for an inſtant we ſanction the imputations, and ſuffer them to acquire vigour; as we tender our moral character in ſociety, we ſhould loudly aſſert that the propoſition is univerſally falſe, and the prejudice univerſally groundleſs. If we curtail a ſingle iota from our claim, it is an evidence that we do not think it juſt; if we omit any occaſion of public and parliamentary diſcuſſion, it may be inferred that we are awed by conſcience. Unleſs our adverſaries were aware that the reaſon of our cauſe is irreſiſtible, and that relief muſt follow cloſe upon inveſtigation, why ſhould they endeavour by ſo much aſſiduity to divert, and by ſo many manœuvres to deter us from ſubmitting our claim to the legiſlature?

If we ſhall previouſly acquire the capacity to become electors, the amoval of other diſqualifications muſt enſue ſpeedily, whereas to commence by the latter will rather obſtruct us in the purſuit of the former.

There exiſt at preſent very few means of influencing Roman Catholics. When a proud or an active ſpirit ariſes in the party, his exertions are rather ſharpened by the view of thoſe advantages he is deprived of. All the deſcriptions of corruption, which, without offending delicacy, undermine virtue, are utterly impracticable; to be rendered eligible to officers in the army, the revenue, and to ſituations of municipal importance, would only turn upon our party the arts of political debauchery, and furniſh the means to take off our leaders. The man of weight will be complimented with a pair of colours for his ſon or brother, a place in ſome public office for a relation or dependant. It muſt be truly a coarſe mind which will not reject plain money, but whilſt obligations of this nature are conferred, many will not refuſe to gatify their pow-

erful

erful friend, by endeavouring to repreſs the diſſatiſfaction of their brethren.

This ſpecies of progreſſive emancipation would not, as is ſuppoſed by the Proteſtant advocates for the experiment, prepare the Catholics for complete liberty. * Almoſt every reſtriction operates upon ranks utterly unconnected with each other. It muſt not be concluded that, becauſe the Catholic gentry ſhould have been qualified, for five or more years, to receive the commiſſion of the peace, a Catholic peaſant will, at the expiration of that term, exerciſe more ſoundly his diſcretion as an elector. The ſame reaſoning applies equally to another expedient, which has been recommended, the admitting at firſt, only freeholders of large property, ſuppoſe 100l. annually. As the oppoſition to the Catholics proceeds principally from thoſe who have a private intereſt in abridging the number of electors, it will not appear difficult to account for this propoſal; but I do not imagine a ſenſible adminiſtration will ever adopt it: it is not poſſible to deviſe any means more likely to produce miſchief. A breach in the fortreſs, although calculated but for the admiſſion of few, would not leſs effectually betray its weakneſs, than if it gave acceſs to the entire people. In addition to their preſent diſcontents, the excluded portion would become clamorous from jealouſy, and they would be more untractable, as they might imagine themſelves betrayed by their leaders, and the men of property would loſe their influence. Although it be not immediately before us, I muſt obſerve here, that the qualification for franchiſe, propoſed laſt winter in ſome reſolutions of the Ca-

* I comply with the common cant in arguing this matter, but if liberty means the exerciſe of franchiſe, it requires leſs diſcernment to chuſe a member of parliament than to purchaſe a cow at a fair. Any man who has underſtanding ſufficient to acquire a 10l. freehold, or to retain it, if acquired for him, is fully competent to vote at his county election.

tholic Committee, was moſt injudiciouſly ſelected, and proves that the perſons who undertook the management of this tranſaction, did not underſtand it. The freeholders of the counties of the towns of Cork, Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, Galway, and Drogheda, a great part of the trading intereſt, were not compriſed within the plan; and as the degree of relief propoſed, was rather ſubſtantial, and included many, it would have been probably a work of time and trouble to repair the overſight. A convincing evidence that acts which may be ſuppoſed to emanate from the wiſhes of an entire people, and in which errors may be eternally concluſive, ought to be weighed with more than the accuſtomed circumſpection.

Franchiſe is, in this country, either perſonal as in boroughs, or accruing from the poſſeſſion of freehold property. I exclude the former from my ſcheme of reaſoning, becauſe I do not think it enviable to be connected with them. The law, by authoriſing Catholic freeholders to vote at the election of repreſentatives, would not convey the franchiſe itſelf, but the capacity to exerciſe it, when the qualification had been already procured by the ordinary means of acquiſition. As, from the rigour of the laws, the Catholics have been, until lately, prohibited to obtain that ſpecies of landed property; conſidered with relation to their numbers, they poſſeſs few freeholds. They only can acquire them from Proteſtants, who, it is preſumed, will not alienate for the mere purpoſe of creating a Catholic influence. The admiſſion to franchiſe muſt therefore be neceſſarily gradual, and the law, which ſhould cancel the excluſion, cannot for a conſiderable period communicate any material degree of weight to the Catholics. It will merely operate as an act of humanity by aboliſhing the ſyſtem of vexatious partiality, which grinds the poor; and as an act of national policy, by creating a ſub-

a ſubſtantial yeomanry in the ſouthern provinces. Unleſs the Proteſtants ſhould alienate, and the Catholics acquire landed property, in an over proportion, the former muſt poſſeſs for ever a ſuperiority of influence.

I therefore inſiſt, that to reſtore the Catholics to the capacity of ſuffrage, leaving the acquiſition of that ſuffrage to their induſtry, is no more than a gradual emancipation. That of all other modes, this is moſt conſonant to the idea of thoſe who deſire to aſſociate the Catholics from time to time into the conſtitution: for, if the right of ſuffrage be withheld for fifty years, it will then be neceſſary to admit all, who during that ſpace of time ſhall have acquired freeholds; whereas at preſent, only a portion can be entitled to vote, and ſo progreſſively a new portion every general election.

Finally, that, the project for removing the penalties againſt the Catholics from time to time, *& ſeriatim*, is not a ſcheme of progreſſive emancipation, but furniſhes the means of jobbing with the Catholics, of retaining them in expectation, and conſequently, in dependance.

And certainly the opportunity will not be neglected: the miniſter who can attach three millions and half to his perſon, by an act of juſtice, which all Europe muſt applaud, may attempt any meaſure; he has only to conciliate the Catholics by conceſſions, which the Proteſtants deny, and thus ſecure impunity. The individual, in public life, may ſupport that miniſter, be he ever ſo profligate; let him but reprobate the Popery Laws, the favour of the great body of his countrymen will compenſate for the loſs of popularity with the remainder.

The ſame intereſt which prompts us to ſeek the removal of this diſqualification, may produce in others a deſire to continue it. They are authoriſed to reſiſt our application. But as it is our duty to ſo-

licit, ſo is it their's to oppoſe with decorum. I do not think that the Catholics have failed in moderation, but I conſider their adverſaries ſcandalouſly deficient. The proceedings on the one part have been reſpectful, on the other authoritative; we have prayed for harmony, whilſt they threatened confuſion; we have ſpoken of peace, whilſt they vociferated bloodſhed. I muſt repeat after the Roman Catholics of Waterford, that the propenſity to ſedition in this kingdom is among the aſcendancy confederations of Dublin and the grand juries; that if tumult be in agitation, thoſe, who threaten or forbode it, muſt underſtand the means, and have concerted the project. They alone are ſuſpicious, they alone are guilty of indecent intimidation.

In purſuit of the great advantages we hold in view, no mean obſtacles are to be ſurmounted. We muſt encounter a formidable array of paſſions, prejudices, and intereſts. All thoſe in every rank of life who have taſted the ſweets of monopoly, and are deſirous to protract the enjoyment. Every feeble mind, the prey of vulgar errors; every ungenerous wretch who delights in dominion. The whole tribe of pſeudo philanthropiſts, ſo common in Ireland, who, wrapt in the admiration of French or American liberty, cannot ſpare a compaſſionate thought for their enſlaved brethren; who, as dying miſers were wont to ranſom their ſouls by the grant of that which had become ſuperfluous, think they offer a ſufficient tribute of adoration to the God of freedom, by exulting at the eſtabliſhment of a free conſtitution, which they had no intereſt in oppoſing.

We are animated by the juſtice of our cauſe, that repugnance to ſubmit to degradation, the growth of every noble mind. Our perſonal honour, which is tarniſhed, whilſt we ſuffer without complaint, that the public records of our country pronounce us deſpicable or dangerous. Our individual happineſs

pineſs and the intereſt of thoſe who ſhall ſucceed us.

Credite, qui nunc eſt, populum, populumque futurum,
Permixtas afferre preces, hæc libera naſci,
Hæc vult turba mori.

It ſhould ſtimulate us, that although the paths of preferment be no longer interdicted by the legiſlature, yet whilſt we want that quality, which in a government, ſuch as our's, conſtitutes the ſole recommendation, we muſt embark in theſe purſuits under the diſcouragement of partiality and preference, which the poſſeſſion of political importance produces to our diſadvantage.

We learn from the very oppoſition, the value and neceſſity of our exertions; it is vehement, and we are told will be eternal: ſtrong reaſons not to abandon our cauſe to accident, or the caſual progreſs of liberality. There appears at preſent more reluctance to admit the Roman Catholics to the privilege of ſuffrage than in 1783, the period of the Convention. If we ſuffer our claim to lie dormant for half a century, in proportion as the monopoly of conſtitution becomes more valuable, thoſe who hold it, will be more intent on the excluſion. At ſome period this repugnance muſt be met with firmneſs. I can foreſee no change of circumſtances, which ſhould render a future more eligible than the preſent ſeaſon; the numbers are not likely to decreaſe, and the religious ſentiments, the pretext of ſo much averſion, are immutable.

The caution deduced from the preſent ſtate of France has been ſo often demonſtrated erroneous, that I think it here unneceſſary to expatiate on the ſubject. If gentlemen are permitted to poſtpone a diſcuſſion upon which they deſire never to enter, until the world, or even until Europe ſhall be tran-

quil, they will find to the end of time, one pretext or other for the adjournment.

If I were entitled to the joint poſſeſſion of a tenement, and informed by the occupier that he doubted not the validity of my claim, but, indeed, a neighbouring concern being on fire, he was ſo intent gazing on the conflagration, or taking precautions to guarantee himſelf from the effects of it, that he could not at preſent render juſtice to me; I ſhould reply, give me admittance, that I may protect our common property; but circumſtanced as I now am, I have not the power, nor indeed much inclination to aſſiſt you.

Our enemies have frequently endeavoured to complicate our proceedings with thoſe of France; our friends too, have ſometimes imagined that the ſucceſs of the popular party in that country ſhould encourage us. The firſt we all diſclaim in common; the ſecond (I offer the opinion of an individual) ought not to produce the ſmalleſt effect upon our proceedings, ought not for an inſtant to animate or retard us. We cannot conſider France a model, but merely as a country eligible for emigration. If two or three years ago they had ceaſed to reform, and ſettled the nation under a conſtitution of well-controuled monarchy, it would have been now the aſylum of the oppreſſed; ſurrounding governments muſt have relaxed, or they would have been depopulated, and Liberty would have found its level throughout Europe.

So long as the ſettlement of France is procraſtinated, the events, which take place there, can produce no effect upon our emancipation. On the contrary, her freedom tarniſhed with ferocity, and degenerating in the opinion of many perſons, into licentiouſneſs, rather deters moderate men from giving their ſanction to popular proceedings.

Whatever may be the iſſue of the conteſt, *deſpotiſm is ſubverted.* At the concluſion of the war, France

France will ſtand in need of population and property. Even if the royaliſts ſucceed, there is a revolution in public opinion, which will prevent the poſſibility of reſtoring the former deteſtable domination. Believing that a republic is an unwieldy, and a dangerous form of government for a large ſtate, and that the endeavour to eſtabliſh it, in France, retards the ſettlement of the country, my wiſhes are not formed for the ſtability of the Gallic Commonwealth.

We certainly cannot carry our cauſe in the teeth of adminiſtration. The miniſter of the day muſt be with us. But it is not therefore to be concluded, that miniſters are to be won by tame, cringing, indefinite acquieſcence. Without rudeneſs to the ſovereign power, we can have no difficulty to convince a miniſter that this numerous body of ſubjects are extremely material to his intereſts, and the intereſts of Government. If we have ſpirit and be unanimous, like any other claſs of men in the nation, he will without difficulty diſcover the alteration in our ſituation and ſentiments, and he will comply with us.

It is equally true, that adminiſtration at preſent ſeems to countenance the oppoſition. But this circumſtance it is eaſy to account for. The Catholics are ſcattered and diſunited; if a miniſter eſpouſed their cauſe, they could not protect him againſt the multitude of enemies he ſhould excite. They muſt arrange themſelves into a compact body, attached to their friends, hoſtile to their enemies, and ready to receive with open arms the man who faces danger in their ſervice. On no other terms can a miniſter be expected to patroniſe them. A patriot ſtateſman might generouſly volunteer to relieve his country; but like Turgot, he would fall a ſacrifice to thoſe who have an intereſt in the abuſes.

The Catholics are to be conſidered as in a ſtate of probation. Probably their powerful adverſaries have

have undertaken to ſilence, or to intimidate them. The miniſter is therefore neuter; but, if he ſees theſe gentlemen unable to fulfil their contract, he will conſent to the emancipation of the Catholics.

It is natural to ſuppoſe, that if aſſured we were in earneſt, the Britiſh cabinet would adopt this mode of conduct, for we muſt otherwiſe be an impediment to its operations. I put out of the queſtion the poſſibility that we ſhould take arms, to which there is an unſuperable objection, that is hopeleſs ſucceſs. But the adminiſtration of the empire could never undertake any meaſure of importance, whilſt in its rear, is placed the incumbrance of three or four diſcontented millions, unwilling to aſſiſt in caſe of emergency.

Does not common ſenſe point out, that the crown would be deſirous to ſatisfy this hoſt, and to attach them; eſpecially when the boon is not at the expence of the crown itſelf, but of the ariſtocracy? It is to be obſerved that the Iriſh ariſtocracy is formed to be peculiarly hateful to the monarch, for it affects a controlling power, independent of him.

I do not believe that antient or modern hiſtory affords a ſingle inſtance, in which the ſupreme power made conceſſions from benevolence; at leaſt, ſuch events are too ſingular to conſtitute a precedent. It would be juſt as wiſe, like the Jews, to reſt our hopes upon a miraculous deliverance, as to expect that any miniſter will undertake our cauſe, unleſs under a conviction that it is expedient. To create this expedience is our duty.

Without the conſent of the Britiſh miniſter, the freedom of legiſlature, or extenſion of commerce, would not have been procured with ſo much facility. But we never ſhould have obtained that conſent, if we had expected the operation of his be-

nevolence. The nation demanded its rights on that occaſion with unanimity, and the miniſter yielded. Not becauſe he thought it impoſſible to ſubdue the ſpirit, but becauſe he felt, as every prudent miniſter muſt feel in ſimilar circumſtances, that it is politic to retain the people in temper by reaſonable conceſſions, and that the advantages of a victory would not be equivalent to the evils which purchaſed it.

Mr. Pitt was not apprehenſive that the London ſhopkeepers would excite an inſurrection, when he very reluctantly gave up the ſhop-tax: but he was aware, that adhering to a meaſure, in the face of a ſpirited and perſevering body, created a multitude of enemies, with whom it was not prudent to be at variance. The body of the Iriſh Catholics are entitled, from the miniſter, to about ten thouſand times the degree of conſideration, which any man would annex to the London ſhopkeepers. But we have been hitherto defective in ſpirit and unanimity.

I enter into this detail, becauſe when one talks of a ſpirited oppoſition, it is no uncommon interrogation, do you mean to revolt? I anſwer, I do not recommend revolt, it is not likely to ſucceed; and I ſcarcely think, that any political good is worth the purchaſe of confuſion. France has inſtructed mankind how a revolution may be brought about, and why it ought not to be attempted.

It is the very eſſence of a free conſtitution, and, perhaps, its principal advantage, that it provides expedients for relief, other than by violence. The Iriſh organization of ſociety was framed for the purpoſe of preſerving liberty; it can only by extreme force be perverted to oppreſſion. Still many rights remain which it is impoſſible to wreſt from us. By the temperate and judicious uſe of them, and of our influence, the remainder will be eaſily recovered.

Poſſibly

Poſſibly the parliamentary proprietors would rather riſk a civil war than do juſtice; at leaſt the conjecture is probable, from the recent threats thrown out by their adherents in the grand juries, and in the circular letter of the corporation of Dublin; a compilation of preſumptuous nonſenſe, worthy an aggregate of lunatics; which I do not heſitate to pronounce, a moſt uſeful and fortunate publication for the Iriſh Catholics, as it expoſes, in the cleareſt manner, the nature of their claims, and the arrogant pretenſions of their opponents. Theſe gentlemen are aware, that their influence muſt decreaſe in proportion as that of the nation riſes. They know, that neither the conſtitution now eſtabliſhed, nor the freedom of religion, nor the unity of empire, could be endangered by reſtoring to the Catholics the capacity to become electors. But they know that thoſe Roman Catholics, who ſhould acquire ſuffrage, would become, like the Proteſtants who poſſeſs it, inquiſitive and ſpirited.

That public diſburſements muſt, in that caſe be, more than they now are, ſacred to public utility.

Let us review the reſources for this enterprize, if the perſons I allude to were inclined to undertake it.

Will the ariſtocracy itſelf take the field, with its phalanx of grand jurors, burgeſſes, and portrieves, of commiſſioners and dignitaries, of dependent gaugers and expectant parſons? No, no; military execution, where there is no poſſibility of reſiſtance, or the triumph of eſcorting a convict to the gibbet, will ſignalize the proweſs of theſe gentlemen, and conſtitute the ſum of their atchievements.

The labouring poor of three provinces are univerſally Catholic; the intermediate tenantry, who influence the neighbouring poor are moſtly of that perſuaſion.

perſuaſion. Theſe men are, of all others, the moſt intereſted, that the capacity for ſuffrage ſhould be communicated to the Catholics. They will not eaſily be induced to fight againſt the extenſion of their own privileges.

Will the Preſbyterian yeomanry of the north take up arms, for the courtiers who enjoy penſions, for the parſons who exact tithes, and the landlords, who impoſe rack-rents? They too are complainants; if they unſheath the ſword againſt their brethren, will they be likely to return it to the ſcabbard, until they have procured very ample redreſs, and removed the cauſe of their diſſatisfaction?

Should that people ever be embodied, Tithes, Boroughs, all the arts and practices of monopoly muſt inevitably fall before them. Now, the objectionable parts of our government, which are more dear to the powerful in Ireland, than any religion whatſoever, would be not more than remotely affected by complying with the peaceable ſolicitation of the Catholics. It is therefore to be preſumed, that the greater evil would rather by conceſſion be averted than provoked by injudicious oppoſition.

What ſhall become of the eſtates of the great landed Proprietors, whilſt the Tenantry of Ireland is perſecuted, or in reſiſtance? And theſe eſtates, how much ſoever impoveriſhed and depopulated, muſt defray the military force and all contingent expences. Would the advantage be equivalent to this purchaſe?

The military force of Ireland is, under ſome circumſtances, ſufficient to keep the people in ſubjection; but let us conſider the conſequences of ſuffering it to be employed in that duty.

The troops on this eſtabliſhment are compoſed of Scotch or Engliſh, mixed with ſome natives, in whom an unſettled life and intercourſe with

ſtrangers have weakened or effaced their local affections, if they be ever brought on the ſtage of Iriſh politics, they will become maſters of the theatre. They will certainly follow their officers againſt the people, but they will follow the ſame officers at the command of the Britiſh miniſter, againſt the victorious remnant of the nation. So that by employing theſe troops againſt the Catholics, the keys of the country are laid at the feet of the Britiſh miniſter. He will uſe his authority, as every Britiſh miniſter would deſire to uſe it, and re-eſtabliſh the antient dominion of England. He will do more, he will rivet the chains to all eternity. Taught by experience that a Parliament, although for a time it may be debilitated, bears in its boſom the principle of renovation; that if ſuffered to ſubſiſt, it will riſe as before into rivalſhip, and ſubvert as before this darling ſupremacy, he will extinguiſh by an union every promiſe of future vigour, and rob Ireland of its legiſlature with the ſame ſword, by which he has cut down the pretenſions of the Catholics. No more Iriſh Chancellors, Iriſh Judges, Iriſh Commiſſioners, or Iriſh Biſhops, vaniſhed every reward and every emulation. Our national character will ſink into debaſement. Our nobility be degraded into Engliſh ſquires; our gentry into Engliſh boors, and our country into Engliſh plantations. The name be effaced from among nations, and after having glittered awhile in the eyes of Europe, the land we cheriſh become a blank; deſpiſed and forgotten, the level ſink of ignorance and bigotry.

Such muſt be the inevitable conſequence of introducing a foreign force into the management of our domeſtic tranſactions. If it were, however, poſſible to avert an union, fatal to the Iriſh name and nation, at leaſt the victorious auxiliaries ſhould be gratified with an eſtabliſhment in the country. But this colony would not, after its victory in

the field, be ſo docile as the Catholics, impreſſed with gratitude for conceſſions in the cabinet.

The arguments againſt employing the accuſtomed ſtanding army of the country, apply yet more forcibly againſt the propriety of calling in additional aid from England, or the poſſibility of obtaining it.

It is utterly immaterial to the miniſter or people of England, whether five hundred or five thouſand conſtituents return two knights of the ſhire to the commons houſe of Ireland. This point concerns only the Iriſh candidate, who muſt deſire to be as little as poſſible, embarraſſed by numbers in his canvaſs. Unleſs it were with a deſign utterly to ſubjugate this country in conſequence of its diviſions, what inducement could prevail on England to undertake the expence of equipping an armament againſt us? The threat of the power of England is an impotent menace. If the ſiſter nation were at any time inclined to embroil herſelf with this country, ſhe would have conteſted the monopoly of trade and ſupremacy of legiſlature. Either of theſe objects were important. The one as it ſecured our dependance; the other, as it rendered that dependance valuable. Having at that period declined entering into an hoſtile conflict. Having afterwards when unincumbered by foreign war, declined to recover her juriſdiction by violence on the occaſion of the Propoſitions; will any man in his ſenſes aſſert, that ſhe would think of expending her blood and treaſure, upon a mere domeſtic regulation, which does not affect her commerce or her glory; the unity of the crowns, or welfare of the empire?

Ireland is valuable to Great Britain, becauſe in time of war we contribute to her ſtrength; becauſe by our abſentees we yield revenue; becauſe we ſupply a mart for her commodities, and aſſiſt in the conſumption of her manufactures. But it is Ire-

land induſtrious and contented, not Ireland indolent and divided, which is important to the ſiſter nation: better for her utterly to renounce the connection, than to hold it by the tenure of a civil war every century. Every advantage, England derives from us, would terminate, if our tranquillity were interrupted; it would be therefore inexpedient to countenance a derangement in the peace of Ireland, although it were enſured, that the Britiſh arms ſhould bear unreſiſted devaſtation through every quarter of the iſland.

I can only diſcern a ſingle inducement, which might engage England to intermeddle in the internal regulations of this country; I have already ſtated it, an union on her own terms. It is probable ſhe would not deſire an union of negociation, ſuch as it might be expected, if the countries, each in full vigour, treated upon terms of equality. It is yet more probable, that an union by conqueſt would prove acceptable. Without elevating the individuals of the Iriſh nation to the level of her citizens, ſhe then might impoſe eternal ſilence on our murmurs. The perſons likely to be injured materially by this event, are exactly thoſe who enjoy the emoluments and honours of adminiſtration. It would therefore become the intereſt of England, rather to aggrandiſe the body of the people, and thus to ſecure them againſt the future diſcontents of the upper orders. By this reaſoning, I cannot ſee that the force of England would not be more likely to eſpouſe our quarrel;* we are no longer an object of plunder;

* It muſt appear to every obſerver, that any advantage derived by England from the connection, ariſes not from the men of conſequence, but from the people, (that is, the great diſſenting bodies;) that if the latter loſing temper, refuſed to enliſt or conſume, the connection would become rather an inconvenience than a benefit to Britain! What is the policy, and, of courſe, what would be the conduct of the ſiſter kingdom on this occaſion, does not admit of a moment's heſitation. For the

plunder; if adventurers were to engage, lured by the hope of proſcription, the poſſeſſions of the Church of England would furniſh more temptation.

Reflection is a prominent feature in the Engliſh character; our cauſe is already become a topic of diſcuſſion; every perſon of literary eminence in England is our advocate. That nation exerciſes over its miniſters an inquiſitorial juriſdiction; men in ſtation muſt attend to public opinion, and watch its dictates. If we demand, with unaſſuming firmneſs, and temperate determination, not the indulgence of political caprice, but thoſe identical rights, of which every Briton holds the poſſeſſion invaluable, If we appear to our fellow ſubjects deſirous to preſerve inviolate the connection of the aſſociated kingdoms, rivalling them in loyalty, and deſirous to imitate them in liberty, they will naturally aſk, what advantage they ſhould derive from an expenſive conflict with a nation, which it is their intereſt to preſerve, and of which the ruin would be perceived in every branch of their trade and manufactures?

Scotland, at the cloſe of the laſt century, was ſomewhat circumſtanced with regard to religion, as Ireland is now. The upper ranks adhered to the Church of England; Preſbyterianiſm was the religion of the people. Under the Stuarts they experienced a fierce, rigorous, and unabated perſecution; King William transferred the eſtabliſhment from the perſecutors to the perſecuted: the people embarked in the ſame bottom with government, and holding the poſſeſſion of their favourite object by the ſame tenure, which ſecured to the ſovereign his throne, upheld the new ſettlement with great pertinacity againſt the nobility and gentry, who

the hint which conducted me into this reaſoning on the probable conduct of Great Britain, I am indebted to a very excellent pamphlet, "Political Arithmetic." By James Laffan, Eſq.

were

were never, to the preſent reign, attached to the reigning family.

Moreover the abſentees conſtitute an eternal hoſtage for the conduct of Great Britain; theſe perſons have little or no intereſt in the Proteſtant aſcendency; if the Roman Catholics emigrate in diſguſt, they will want tenants; if there is any commotion, they are obnoxious to every party, and their properties would moſt indubitably ſuffer; they poſſeſs immenſe influence in the ſiſter kingdom, and will certainly upon all occaſions, exert that influence to prevent the miniſter from making any raſh attempt on Ireland. Juſtice will, indeed, rather be ſuffered to take its courſe than any violent meaſure adopted; for if ever more the ſword be drawn among us, which ever party may prevail, the ariſtocracy periſhes. It would fall, if after a victory, Engliſh or north country colonies were to be planted in the Catholic provinces; theſe perſons, with arms in their hands, would not prove alike obedient, as the preſent Catholics, when completely emancipated. Thus there appear conſequences, which defend a people from injuſtice, without, on their part, a ſingle effort of reſiſtance. Thus by the wiſe diſpenſations of Providence, all the orders of ſociety are ſo admirably adjuſted, that oppreſſive meaſures, adopted with regard to any deſcription of citizens, cannot fail to involve the aggreſſors in deſtruction.

The enemies of the Catholics ſeem inclined to play a deſperate game; I truſt it is only appearance, for the leading men of the kingdom, thoſe of whom the influence is natural, not ſpurious, and who muſt ſway in this inſtance, would certainly ſuffer more by a year of commotion, than they poſſibly could profit in half a century by this nonſenſical aſcendancy. It has been attempted to impute ſeditious and ſanguinary deſigns to the Catholics, of which a ſingle proof cannot be alledged, and which,

on

on the contrary, are repugnant to every evidence. The authors of ſuch idle tales are perhaps not aware, that whilſt they only deſign to intimidate and divide us by an electioneering manœuvre, they materially endanger the credit of this commercial country, an injury more ſerious, than if their aſcendancy had never exiſted, or that their *lives and fortunes* had periſhed by an earthquake. It is poſſible the ſame perſons may endeavour to inflame the indigent Catholics, and to affix the charge of revolt upon the eaſy and opulent; theſe deſcriptions, it will, without doubt, be impoſſible to irritate.

But it becomes neceſſary to inculcate to every order of our communion, the propriety of fruſtrating this deſign, by a moſt paſſive acquieſcence. Warm meaſures alone can retard our emancipation. On the leaſt indication of violence to be commenced by our party, all the moderate and powerful would deſert the enterpriſe, and on theſe reſts our principal reliance. England would be induced to interfere in the cauſe of good government. United, we could not cope with the ſtrength of the empire; divided, thoſe who reſorted to extremities would periſh, the remainder be reduced to a new and more ſevere ſubjection.

I conclude, that ſo long as the Iriſh Catholics, not ſeeking to innovate on the Britiſh conſtitution, only petition to be made partakers of its advantages; ſo long as they demean themſelves dutifully to the crown, and cultivate the mutual proſperity of the aſſociated kingdoms; ſo long as abſtaining from intemperance, they confine themſelves to the means of application and redreſs, which are ſuggeſted or permitted by the conſtitution, they need entertain no apprehenſion of violence, external or domeſtic.

2dly, That it is not the advantage of Great Britain to encourage commotion in this kingdom; on

on the contrary, that it is very much her intereſt to prevent it.

3dly, That the adverſaries of the Catholics are not able by force to prevent their emancipation.

4thly, That if they poſſeſſed the means of coercion, it is not their intereſt to employ them.

5thly, That any interruption of the public peace on the part of the Catholics, or any act which may be conſtrued into hoſtility againſt our happy conſtitution, alienating their beſt friends, and juſtifying their fierceſt enemies, muſt fruſtrate, or, at leaſt, retard the completion of their deſire.

I cannot diſmiſs the ſubject without repeating, that on the ſide of the Catholics there is not the leaſt indication of evil deſigns, or even of ill temper. The moſt irrefragable evidence, that three millions and half are not ſeditious, is, that the charge is banded about the country without the leaſt perſonal inconvenience to its authors. The ridicule of the ſcene will be complete, when we caſt our eyes around us, and obſerve this formidable hoſt of Papiſts, induſtriouſly and peaceably occupied at the plough and the counter.

I have thus far argued an extreme caſe, and entered into a train of reaſoning, which ſhould never have occurred to me, if I had not obſerved a ſort of cruſade preached againſt the Catholics, and authoriſed by the ſignatures of different individuals, who ſtile themſelves Grand Jurors, Aldermen of Skinners Alley, Officers of Corporations, &c. &c. It is aſſerted in the formula of covenant ſigned by theſe aſſociators, that the ſubſcribing parties will reſiſt the claim at the hazard of their lives and fortunes. By this I am led to ſuppoſe, that they are willing to endanger their lives, and ours of conſequence, in order to prevent any Catholic from voting for his repreſentatives. I do by no means credit the aſſertion; and if the gentlemen concerned will ſubmit to the trouble of reading theſe pages, they will find that the

the execution of their threat is neither quite ſo ſafe or eaſy as they imagine.

A matter of internal regulation, propoſed to the Catholics, and regarding only that portion of the Iriſh people, has ſet theſe gentlemen in commotion. It appears to have been in contemplation to depute agents from the reſpective counties, for the purpoſe of ſubmitting to Parliament, or to his majeſty, the unambiguous ſenſe of the Iriſh Catholics on the ſubject of their grievances. If it can be proved that the ſuſpenſion of political rights, accompanied by ſo many collateral privations, does not conſtitute an hardſhip; or, if the Catholics admit, that being ſenſible of the evils, they think that the burden is juſt and ought to be acquieſced in, I am ready to give up the propriety of this delegation. As both the one and the other are admitted univerſally to be falſe, and that this body have the general deſire to be redreſſed, which is natural to all rational beings, they muſt expound their hopes and wiſhes either by agents or principals; that is, either by the promiſcuous aſſemblage of multitudes, like the antient Germans; or by repreſentatives duly authoriſed, like the progeny of theſe Germans, when in a ſtate of civilization. I conceive that there is in the latter method, leſs of hoſtility, and more of good order; and I ſhall continue to think ſo, until theſe officious adviſers ſhall ſuggeſt ſome other mode leſs exceptionable.

It is ſtrange how whimſically inconſiſtent are theſe gentlemen, and how blinded by the conceit of their legal ſelf-importance. If the Roman Catholics caſually uſe, "muſt," for "may," or "will," for "ſhall," if every word be not arranged with more than grammatical preciſion, an alarm runs from Derry to Dingle, every lengthened viſage announces revolt; every angry geſture proclaims inſolence.

But twenty-three gentlemen, who thinking, perhaps, that the character of a Grand Juror is, like Melchiſedeck's prieſthood, indelible; and that every future act of their lives is legaliſed, becauſe they have received for two or three days, a commiſſion to make preſentments, never ſuſpect that it is intimidation or indecency to threaten his Majeſty's good ſubjects, that if they perſevere with a probability of ſucceſs in a purſuit, at once legal, juſtifiable, and commendable, they ſhall be expoſed to the hazard of having their throats cut.

They aſſert, that the ſub-committee of Catholics is not recogniſed by the conſtitution. What conſtitution recogniſes twenty-three men, who having been nominated for a ſpecific purpoſe, to tranſact the county buſineſs, inſtead of peaceably diſperſing, as was their duty, when the object of their appointment had been fulfilled, perhaps during the feſtivity of the evening, lay their hands upon their ſwords, and dictate a menace of murder againſt their unoffending fellow citizens? It deſerves to be conſidered by thoſe Roman Catholics, who intend to perſevere in applying for the privilege of ſuffrage, whether it would not be adviſeable to ſwear the peace againſt every one of thoſe gentlemen, who, during the enſuing winter, ſhall viſit the metropolis.

When in the Convention of 1783, it was propoſed to extend the advantages of repreſentation to the Catholics, a reply echoed from every quarter, (I have the minutes of that meeting before me) that the ſenſe of the Catholics not having been expreſſed on the ſubject, it could not be conſidered. Now it muſt be ſuppoſed, that thoſe who made the remark deſigned to expreſs, that it would have been adviſeable for the Catholics to have had at that time in the metropolis, an aſſemblage of the men of ſenſe and weight of their party, collected from the different parts of the nation, who being fully inſtructed in the ſentiments of their reſpective neighbours, might treat

in their names, and deliver the extent of their expectations and pretenſions.

At that period a meſſage was delivered in the name of Lord Kenmare, which was contradicted by the reſolution of a meeting at which Sir Patrick Bellew preſided. A ſimilar controverſy occurred during the laſt winter, between two bodies of Roman Catholics, each claiming to ſpeak the ſentiments of the people of their perſuaſion. As ſuch altercations are likely to continue to the end of time, common ſenſe requires to terminate the difference by eſtabliſhing an œcumenical tribunal, of which the deciſions ſhall be ſupreme, deciſive and ſatisfactory.

It is not a novelty in this kingdom, that its Catholic inhabitants ſhould be extra-conſtitutionally repreſented. As to the fact of repreſentation, the *imperium in imperio*, between one and one thouſand, the eſſence is unaltered. It is alike a violation of legal forms, whether the individual Viſcount Kenmare, or two hundred gentlemen deputed from the counties and commercial cities, undertake to deliver the ſenſe of this ſcattered body. Miniſters themſelves have encouraged the erection of a ſubordinate principality, and appeared deſirous to protect my Lord Kenmare's juriſdiction. It only is attempted at preſent to improve the government they recogniſed, and to render it more ſuitable to our neceſſities. The former conſtitution was, I preſume, deemed more convenient for the purpoſes to which the Iriſh Catholics were deſtined. Caligula thought ſimilarly of the Roman people; he imagined that beneath one head, they would have been more obnoxious to his caprices.

Are the miniſters of the crown aware, upon what delicate ground they ſtand, whilſt the Iriſh Catholics are compreſſed within the ſpan of any individual? Three millions of aggrieved complainants taught to look to a ſingle hand for conſolation and protection! The perſonal character of the noble-

man we allude to, might be relied on; but at ſome period he muſt have a ſucceſſor, and if a buſtling man of rank ſhould occupy the ſame ſituation, the government of the country could only be conducted by his ſufferance. It is moreover a dominion of opinion, and of courſe muſt be elective. May not perſons of diſtinction conform to our religion for the mere purpoſe of obtaining this pre-eminence? Let any reflecting man deliberate on theſe circumſtances, and anſwer, does he think it a detriment to Ireland, that its Roman Catholic Inhabitants, being under a neceſſity to veſt the ſupreme direction of their affairs in ſome hands, ſhould rather organize themſelves on the plan of a repreſentative government, than of a monarchy?

That they ſhould aggregate, is the courſe of human nature, and might have been foreſeen when theſe ſtatutes were enacted. Even in ſavage life, men are collected by common wants, and preſſed into coalition by common inconveniencies. The line, which ſeparated us from the conſtitution, traced out the ground for this diſtinct confederacy. If the Catholics of Ireland have grievances of which they are ſenſible, unleſs a plague line be eſtabliſhed through the country, aſſuredly they will communicate.

We have no intercourſe with bodies conſtituted by authority; Parliament may enjoin obedience, it cannot expound our wiſhes. Yet our ſentiments are not immaterial. When couched in the language of addreſs, even the expreſſion of them is ſollicited. The law of the land, excluding us from its free conſtitution, does not provide, nor does the jealouſy of the country permit, that intercourſe of protection and dependence which might be ſuppoſed to endear the ſubject to his arbitrary ſovereign. Thus abandoned at every ſide, and reduced to a ſtate of nature, is it wonderful that we endeavour to ſupply the deficiency? You refuſe us admittance to your comfortable

comfortable edifice; can you envy us the ſhed, we erect for our accommodation?

Probably from like motives of expediency, although with them the neceſſity is not equally urgent, every other ſect in this kingdom has eſtabliſhed general ſtated meetings. The Preſbyterians have the ſynod of Ulſter, the Quakers their provincial and national meetings. We hear conſtantly of the proceedings of theſe bodies, yet I know not that there exiſts an act of Parliament, which incorporates the perſons who compoſe them, or in the language of the different Grand Juries, that the conſtitution recogniſes them.

It appears to me that a free conſtitution recogniſes in the firſt inſtance all the members of the community, and eſtabliſhes in them a right to obſerve accurately the proceedings of the legiſlative body. If any individual, or any aggregate of individuals be touched thereby, it authoriſes them, not, indeed, to reſiſt, but to petition, remonſtrate, and to criticiſe with decency. Where many are concerned, they muſt come together to tranſact their common buſineſs. The meeting muſt be peaceable; thoſe things which the law prohibits, muſt not be within the object of it, elſe the parties will be puniſhed, for the violation of law, not for the meeting.

I conceive this to be the fact, becauſe in aid of the evidence of my reaſon, I have the evidence of my ſenſes; this country is filled with meetings and aſſociations, which if to aſſociate were criminal, could not poſſibly be tolerated.

I know not that any ſpecific law embodied the different volunteer corps, of which I ſuppoſe all thoſe were members, who now cenſure this proceeding. It will be ſaid that theſe corps were ſanctioned by the thanks of either legiſlative body; but theſe thanks, if beſtowed upon delinquents, only convict the Lords and Commons, of having proſti-

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tuted the ſacred name of either Houſe, for the purpoſe of countenancing the delinquency.

Under what ſtatute were held the Conventions, to which many of thoſe who cenſure the formation of a Catholic Committee ſent delegates, and in which many of them ſate as repreſentatives? Under what protecting ſtatute are held all the Reform Societies, and Whig Clubs in every part of either kingdom?

The gentlemen who have ſigned theſe reſolutions, ſeem to imagine, that in a free ſtate, no meaſure ſhould be entertained unleſs Parliament ſhall previouſly have prepared the project, and enjoined it. I conceive this to be the reverſe of reality. The citizen of a free ſtate is only reſtrained in his actions by known and poſitive law, and is authoriſed to do every act which does not happen, by that law, to be ſpecifically prohibited. And this fact is exemplified in their own conduct; for although it is ſomewhat more than indecorous to endeavour to awe the legiſlature by anticipating its judgement; and although it wears the aſpect of menace to proclaim, that they will fly to arms, if the wiſdom of Parliament ſhould happen to outweigh their ſentiments; yet have they committed all theſe acts, and ſtand accountable to their country, for the precedent of previouſly deciding a queſtion, on which Parliament alone is competent to pronounce, and for the attempt to intimidate, and the attempt to overawe he legiſlative body.*

If

* I do not wiſh that vindicating the propriety of a delegation of agents to conduct the affairs of the Catholics, I ſhould be conſtrued to juſtify the items of the plan, propoſed by the ſub-committee. This, I conceive, to have been a moſt injudicious means of effecting a good purpoſe; not, indeed, as has been repreſented, containing libel or falſe inflammatory matter, but conſiſting of many weak points, which, as a member of the body, for whoſe uſe it was promulgated, I think reprehenſible. The ſenſe of the Catholics might have been as well, poſſibly better collected,

If our union gives alarm, the remedy is not remote, the aggregation may be diſſolved; it may be torn up by the roots, and the very principle of it effaced for ever, by redreſſing the grievance to which it points, and which produces it. But where ſuch valid grounds of complaint exiſt, factious can never be the deſignation of the complainants.

The recogniſed ſovereign power of the country is intitled to extreme deference. Its duties and province ſhould be kept ſacred from intruſion. We owe this to the good of ſociety, to the order and tranquillity of the ſtate we live in. The legiſlative body ſhould not be intemperately aſſailed; but thoſe who would prevent us from concerting meaſures for our application, ſeem to inſinuate, that it ſhould not be approached on any condition. The Catholic delegation, committee, or whatever name it may bear, can have no hope of ſucceſs, or the members who compoſe it of importance in the nation, but from the ſupport of their party. When it ſhall travel beyond the object of its miſſion, enter into any meaſures but thoſe, which are neceſſary for obtaining a

collected, in a manner leſs agitating and leſs offenſive. In the letter there was rather too much detail, in the project too much machinery; and at the view I have of the buſineſs, I cannot but think it unwiſe, in theſe gentlemen, to have ſent the name of their chairman, like a rattleſnake, through the country, proclaiming alarm, and giving notice to counteract their meaſures. The complication of extraneous matter with our queſtion, which has appeared on this occaſion, has indiſpoſed many, otherwiſe not averſe to the Catholic emancipation.

Another materiai indiſcretion appears to me to have been the aſſertion of a communication "from authority;" I do believe that by this expreſſion, no more was meant to be conveyed, than the ſurmiſe of intelligent individuals. If there had been ſuch communication, to reveal it was weak and criminal; if not, it was fooliſh to affect it. But this is not the only inſtance of play-houſe whiſper advice given by thoſe gentlemen of *the ſub-committee of the Catholics of Ireland.* On one or two occaſions before, they circulated indiſcriminately through the kingdom, printed inſtructions for private conduct. They may be excellent men, and very zealous politicians, but they can ſcarcely be accuſed of conſpiracy.

tranquil

tranquil emancipation, through the ordinary channels of the conſtitution; or uſe any other language, than that of calm entreaty and modeſt expoſtulation, it will fall in its own party. Every ſenſible Catholic will join with every Proteſtant in cenſure. But until there ſhall be a manifeſtation of ſome ſuch deſign, it is the intereſt and the duty of the Iriſh Catholics, to make a joint ſtock of their influence, and intruſt it for ſhort periods to thoſe among themſelves, who ſhall ſeem moſt likely to wield it with moderation and with efficacy. Such perſons, I am confident, will be found among the agents appointed to conduct the Catholic application, of the enſuing ſeſſion. I am obliged reluctantly to expreſs what the entire nation muſt perceive, that the few gentlemen of the metropolis, who have hitherto aſſumed the direction of this buſineſs, ſtand in need of coadjutors. I queſtion their prudence, not their zeal; not their intentions, but their reflection, foreſight, and political ſagacity. It is time the cauſe of a great people ſhould aſſume the appearance of ſyſtem. For the laſt ten months, it has fluctuated before the public, in the hands of unſkilful managers, without even the dignity of ſteadineſs, advancing and retreating, aſſerting and retracting with the giddineſs of ſchool-boys, and at random, as a game of nine-pins.

ADDITIONAL

ADDITIONAL REMARKS.

THIS conſideration ought to decide the Roman Catholics of the kingdom at large to ſtand forward in their own cauſe. If zeal and activity could effectually promote their intereſts, they might limit the agency of their buſineſs to the metropolis, or rather to that part of the metropolis, which has hitherto appeared in it. But wiſdom is neceſſary to aid, to regulate, and to conduct theſe qualities; zeal may otherwiſe prove a dangerous ſpark thrown among a combuſtible people, and activity the fatal current that fans it.

I reject with greater readineſs the ſole and unreſtrained exertion of theſe qualities, becauſe they are more calculated to create tumult than to reach the queſtion, at leaſt in that calm manner, which the majority of men at eaſe will alone think eligible. And becauſe from ſome reflection on the ſubject, I am fully convinced that we are competent to attain our object, by thoſe conſtitutional means, of which every party will approve.

It was formerly uſual with the Catholics, to accept of the ſervices of individuals, or private ſocieties, bringing the great body as little as poſſible before the public. Very obvious reaſons induced the gentlemen, who wiſh to appear leaders in the buſineſs, to deviate about ten months back from this wiſe and dignified policy. Since that time the repetition of reſolutions, addreſſes, juſtifications, circular letters, &c. have given to the repreſentative body of the Catholic people the air of a little ſquibbing club. I would ſuggeſt it, as one of the firſt improvements, to take place *in that repreſentative*

 organ,

organ, that it ſhould imitate, not a little, the former majeſtic reſerve, to be interrupted only on occaſions of ſolemn import. It is the wiſh of all concerned to improve, not to convulſe the country. Let thoſe who are anxious for the appearance of ſpirit, look upon the awful aggregation of three millions. Let them reflect, that the tread of an elephant is more formidable, than an angry cat in the moſt complete diſplay of vigour. I ſhould not decline an uſeful meaſure, becauſe it gave umbrage; but I ſhould cheerfully relinquiſh thoſe which are little more than indifferent; and if a nearly equal effect could be produced, even the moſt material ſhould be managed without offending. The circumſtances of this country are now eſſentially altered; twelve months ago a temperate diſplay of ſpirit was uſeful, it has appeared. It ſhould be our preſent policy, to guide our cauſe with dexterous moderation to its haven, ſteering equally clear of timid acquieſcence, and a propenſity to overact the patriot character.

We have little to expect from the philoſophy of the queſtion operating on the great. Their intereſt in the preſent ſtate of things is too perſonal. As well might the negro cauſe be pleaded before an aſſembly of Jamaica planters. The Weſt Indian muſt confeſs his monopoly unjuſt: but he will tell you that he has in it a certain property, which he will retain to the laſt moment. The leſs candid would perhaps endeavour to colour their uſurpation by ſome ſuch ſophiſm as the Proteſtant aſcendancy. The equity of our cauſe will produce more effect upon the middle ranks of Proteſtants. This deſcription of our fellow citizens, although the greater part of them be for the moment under the influence of deluſion, are our natural allies. It is our intereſt on all occaſions to urge the diſcuſſion. Even our determined enemies expect from us this conduct. Perſeverance in argument, with the means

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of influence, reſulting from a large over-proportion of the producing property of the land, and no inconſiderable ſhare in the capital, will induce our countrymen to reviſe their prejudices. Reflection muſt make proſelytes.

The declarations of this * ſummer do not induce me to retract my prediction that the period of our emancipation is not far diſtant. Theſe are the laſt efforts of expiring bigotry. A large majority of the French Notables, a body, of which the weight and wiſdom can ſuffer no parallel with the Iriſh grand juries, reſolved in favour of letters de cachet, but a few months before the overthrow of the deſpotiſm, by which that tyrannical uſage was ſupported. The object of our requiſition is too juſt and reaſonable to be withheld, if we urge it with firmneſs, moderation, and unanimity. It may be endeavoured for ſome time to baffle or deter us; and a war of words will probably be continued. But if our perſeverance ſurvive the trial of one or two years, no government in its ſenſes will permit this kind of ſeparate juriſdiction to be confirmed within its diſtrict. This, I conceive, to be one of the reſources of our calm emancipation, and of courſe one of the ſtrongeſt motives to combine under a directing council, and to act in uniſon. Force could not certainly diſperſe the coalition, but, it would effectually melt away before conciliation.

Although the meaſures of the Catholics be concerted in common; it occurs to me at this moment, and I throw it out merely for conſideration, that it would be an uſeful ſacrifice to the harmony of the country, if their committee did not appear in many public acts. It may ſuggeſt to its principles. I have little doubt that the application of the Catholics would be more correct, more conſtitutional, and more weighty, if it came from the freeholders

* 1792.

of that communion in the reſpective counties, praying to be relieved from the ſuſpenſion of their elective franchiſe. Thus the ſenſe of the nation would be fully conveyed, and in a form the moſt unexceptionable, and it would be found much more difficult to treat with indifference the petition of the reſpectable men of each county in the kingdom, than thoſe of a ſingle city.

If the oppoſition proceeded from the government of the country, the repreſentation of the commercial body of the metropolis might be very much relied on. But it rather ariſes from gentlemen, who poſſeſs local importance in the reſpective counties. It would, therefore, be uſeful to encourage a ſpirit of activity, and vigilance in the principal Catholics of theſe places. For although the opponents I allude to, may treat with neglect, a citizen of Dublin of great reſpectability, with whom they have no acquaintance, and who can neither injure or promote their electioneering ſchemes; they will not equally overlook a Provincial of leſs national, but more relative conſequence; and obſerving many ſuch perſons in each diſtrict intent on the purſuit, each will probably think, it his intereſt to relax the oppoſition.

From theſe conſiderations, it was projected during the laſt ſeſſion of parliament, that the Catholics of the counties ſhould petition, and ſome had already diſpoſed themſelves to do ſo, but the deſign was interrupted by gentlemen of the metropolis, who did not conſider the meaſure in the ſame ſtrong light of expediency; or who were deſirous to limit the number of perſons likely to attract public attention.

So long as the natural leaders of the Catholics appear even luke-warm, many who from connection, or other circumſtances, could not well oppoſe the unanimous voice of the body, will under pretext of diſunion vote againſt the majority. It was unlucky

unlucky that ſome among the upper claſſes of our perſuaſion were not prepared for the meaſures of laſt winter, I cannot ſay that they have had no reaſon to complain ſince that event.

It may be expected, that remarks ſhould have been offered on the aſſertion, that if the Catholics of Ireland were included among its citizens, the intereſts of the Houſe of Hanover, and of Great Britain, would be endangered. If the moſt determined enemy to both were deſirous to render the connection, and the crown hideous and hateful in Ireland, he would have gone to work like the gentlemen of Louth, and ſome other places, and have told the people that theſe were the obſtacles to their happineſs. The Roman Catholics of the principal commercial cities, have manifeſted their attachment to both by a conduct directly contrary. They have flatly denied the truth of the poſition. They have informed the leſs inſtructed part of their ſociety, that it was only calculated for the purpoſe of intimidation, and thrown the *onus probandi* upon its authors. There let it reſt, as the trick has failed; nay, has had an effect the reverſe of what was intended; it will only procure for the contrivers, the ridicule of diſappointment, and the diſapprobation, no matter how ſevere, of their own party. Had it not been for theſe very proceedings, the ſpirit of the Catholics would not have riſen to its preſent degree of animation. But the denunciation of eternal ſlavery, and the attack upon their right of petition, have excited even thoſe, who before were lukewarm.

The principal, and moſt active opponents of the Catholics, have ſo ordered matters, that, what a few months back was the anxious wiſh of a few, has now become the cauſe of an entire people. There is, I believe, ſcarcely a peaſant in Ireland, who has not been attracted by the late charges and recriminations, and who does not expect ſpeedily

to

to receive a real or imaginary improvement of his condition.

What lately would have been humanity, is now become wiſdom, and may in the courſe of things, ere long, prove neceſſity.

The Grand Juries acted preciſely as the warmeſt friend to our cauſe would have dictated; they ſcattered the enthuſiaſm of emancipation through every county of the kingdom; if they had been ſilent, it would have probably been confined to Dublin; and this would not, for ſome time, amount to any important effect; eventually the claim would be admitted, for, an expenſive monopoly, limited to a few, and to which all contribute, is ſo extremely abſurd, that it cannot long ſurvive even the eſtabliſhment of Sunday Schools, which teach the lower order to write their names. In the nature of things, they muſt in a little time be freed from theſe incapacities.

Some ſophiſtry has been employed of late to perſuade the Catholics that the enjoyment of the elective franchiſe would not be productive of advantage to them. If it be uſeleſs, why is it at all preſerved? If profitable, why not univerſally communicated?

The addition of the collection of the revenue to the definition of Proteſtant aſcendency completes the burleſque, and denotes that the emoluments of government, not the advantage of the country, are the object of its ſupporters. The national utility of this aſcendency, remains, however, ſtill to be proved; I do not recollect that this has in the entire controverſy been attempted. If there is no poſſibility of reconciling it with the union of the people of Ireland, and the equal diſtribution of franchiſes among them, the aſſent of every thinking man will be precarious.

I do not know what may be the advantage accruing to Ireland from Proteſtant aſcendency; but reaſon

reaſon and experience alike prove, that to remove the diſcontents of the people, would improve public credit, and animate induſtry. That of courſe every man in Ireland, who poſſeſſes property, would be a gainer by the event.

It has been alledged, that the diſcontents have been of late created by individuals, and are not of permanent duration. Individuals may perhaps have taught the Catholics to avow their ſentiments more freely. But no exertions could have produced that ſenſibility to grievance, which has been manifeſted. A maſs of talents, as great as ever exiſted at one period in the world, has for many years paſt been ineffectually played off upon the people of England. Yet no degree of ferment was excited, equal to that, which has ariſen in Ireland, during the laſt twelve months.

To the queſtion how far this ferment will conduct, it is impoſſible to anſwer, but very eaſy to conjecture:—when the bonds of ſociety are ſuffered to be broken, popular exceſs may be extravagant:—whilſt ſocial order ſubſiſts, men uſually murmur, until their wants are in equilibrium with their enjoyments. In the confiſcation of church property, individuals would find little advantage. If the hierarchy bottoms itſelf upon national grievances, it is poſſible that at ſome period or other, a rude aſſault might involve what is good, and what is bad, the cauſe and the effect, in a common overthrow. If it does not identify itſelf with theſe grievances, it can only fall by the neglect or deſertion of its own proſelytes. The inconvenience will not be of magnitude ſufficient to induce a conſpiracy of the different diſſenting bodies, and to provoke an attack, in which they muſt riſk their perſonal ſafety, and private happineſs, againſt the eccleſiaſtical property and honours.

In order to thwart the Roman Catholics, who were ſuppoſed ſtill to retain ſome lingering af-

ſection for the Houſe of Stuart, when they required permiſſion to teſtify their allegiance a few years ago, it was made compulſory on them to ſwear, that the Stuart family "had no right, and "ought to have no right to the crown of theſe "realms;" two propoſitions which could never be aſſented to by any man, who had not clearly aſcertained in his own mind, *the ſovereignty of the people, and the right to caſhier their governors.* So that the Catholics have been forced by their rulers to become *ſworn Whigs and Revolutioniſts* in the moſt extenſive import of either term. Quere to the gentlemen who framed that oath. Do they think, that it was material to them, to have purchaſed a renunciation of this drooping claim upon ſuch conditions? After having thus forced us to become ſpeculative politicians, it is ſuppoſed that we ſhall acquieſce in a government not of king, nobles, or uniformly of gentlemen. But of forty ſhilling freeholders, and venal freemen, the common council of Dublin, the guild of St. Loy,* and Aldermen of Skinner's Alley. The primary revolution of France was well ſaid to have been the conflict of every principle againſt every error. But in the proceedings relative to the Iriſh Catholics, all errors and principles have been in colliſion each againſt the other.

If ever the laws of ſubordination be ſuperſeded in Ireland, a train of events will enſue, exactly ſimilar to thoſe in France, and for the ſame reaſon; the upper ranks lean too heavily upon the lower. It would be different in England; the commonalty of that country are not excluded from the comforts of life, they would of courſe be ſufferers by the ſuſpenſion of ſocial order. I do not urge this remark to the extreme of which it is ſuſceptible.

* The firſt a corporation, the ſecond a club, in Dublin which diſtinguiſhed their zeal againſt the Catholics.

Theſe

Theſe obſervations may probably appear free to thoſe who conſider the Roman Catholics a vaſſal and dependent people. I conceive that from nature, and the conſtitution, we are entitled to all rights whatever; but that the exerciſe of part of theſe rights is accidentally ſuſpended. Writing haſtily without the hopes of fame, and merely limited in view to public benefit, I have not been very faſtidious in my choice of expreſſions:—I offer this apology alone to literary criticiſm.

DECLARATION

AT A

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS

OF THE

COUNTY AND CITY

OF

CORK,

Convened by public Advertiſement, and held at the Cork Tavern, the 15th of October, 1792, the following Declaration was unanimouſly agreed to.

A

DECLARATION, &c.

WE, the Roman Catholics of the county and city of Cork, compelled by the menaces and intimidations which are daily repeated and renewed in the public prints, to deviate from that rule of ſilent expectation we had preſcribed to ourſelves, think it our duty at this criſis to interfere, and reſcue from opprobrium the character of that body of which we form no inconſiderable portion.

We embrace the occaſion of teſtifying our entire approbation and concurrence in the ſentiments expreſſed by our oppreſſed brethren throughout the kingdom; like them we are loyal, attached to our country and to the conſtitution which it poſſeſſes; like them inflexibly determined to ſeek by all peaceable and legal means, that participation in the elective franchiſe, which we are qualified to enjoy by our ſituation, patriotiſm, and property.

As the inhabitants of an extenſive county, and great commercial city, we cannot ſtigmatize too ſtrongly the unguarded conduct of thoſe perſons, probably not much intereſted in the national welfare, who, by angry reſolutions of reſiſtance where no attack was deſigned, or even to be apprehended;

prehended; and by dangerous confederations, which there is no pretence to juſtify, have diffuſed vague conjectures through Ireland and foreign countries; interrupting at home the public tranquillity and the harmony of ſocial life, repreſenting us abroad in a condition of precarious ſettlement. We ſee the ſpirit of intolerance obſervable in thoſe proceedings with aſtoniſhment, in an age which is denominated enlightened, and among a people, who have laid claim to the praiſe of information and liberality.

We never can admit, that the excluſion of three-fourths of the people from any connection with the legiſlature, which diſpoſes of their lives, their liberty, and fortunes, is an eſſential and fundamental principle in the organization of ſociety within this iſland. The diſfranchiſement of a large portion of the Iriſh people was the temporary expedient of a diſtempered age; it is time it ſhould be cancelled. It is time the privilege of voting for repreſentatives ſhould be re-annexed to our freehold property, and ſuffrage become, what the conſtitution deſigned it, the protection and reward of induſtry. The good of the country, the liberality of the age, the ſecurity our property affords, the proofs and the pledges we have given of patriotiſm and loyalty, all call aloud for a happy reconciliation of parties, grounded upon this act of ſubſtantial juſtice.

The enemies of that great good of Ireland, our emancipation, endeavour to divert the public mind from this diſcuſſion, and to overwhelm our calm repreſentation in the outcry of ſedition. They are aware, that, ſupported by reaſon and juſtice, if our Proteſtant countrymen ſhall inveſtigate our cauſe, we muſt triumph over the baſe views and prejudices of the intereſted and bigotted; but we call upon our Proteſtant friends and neighbours to judge us, not from exaggerations and calumnies,

but by their perſonal obſervation; by the general tenor of our lives and conduct; by the duties which we fulfil in common. Is there any room for the unkind ſurmiſes which circulate? Are there no terms upon which we may hope to be reſtored to our country?---In the general havoc of our rights, remonſtrance, petition, and diſcuſſion were preſerved. We uſe them with that deference to the exiſting laws, and attention to the public peace, which befits men connected by every endearing tie to their country. Will any honeſt man lay his hand upon his breaſt, and anſwer, is our conduct diſorderly? Is our mode of redreſs indecent? Are our grievances fictitious? In every purſuit we are intercepted by monopoly; we are deprived of all that is called enviable in political life, and of many ſolid advantages of ſociety. When we inquire the cauſe of this excluſion, we are denominated ſeditious.

We have a ſtrong cauſe; it requires but the aid of argument, and this auxiliary ALONE we will employ: we ſolicit from our Proteſtant countrymen a patient hearing, that we may demonſtrate to them, that by redreſſing our grievances, they ſerve our common country and do not endanger their eſtabliſhment. We have no means of procuring redreſs, but by impreſſing conviction upon the Proteſtant repreſentatives of Proteſtant Conſtituents.

For us ſtands all that is illuſtrious in the land for talent and public ſpirit! The men who encourage venality and trade in corruption, are arrayed againſt us. It may be convenient to ſuch perſons to limit the number of free agents within the realm, but will the ſenſible and diſintereſted Proteſtants of Ireland be deceived by their unfounded aſſertions, their unſubſtantiated charges, and fanciful hypotheſes? Will they credit that we would innovate in proſperity, who in adverſity are moderate

rate and ſubmiſſive? Will they believe we have an alien hope, who have appeared in every hour of peril, armed by their ſides for our common protection, and who have, within the period of their recollection, reſiſted the only powers on earth whom we could be ſuppoſed to favour? Will they not rather attend to the evidence of their ſenſes? That as the paſt repeal of the Popery Laws has been the cauſe of national proſperity, ſo by the future muſt our country flouriſh. That it is more politic to recompenſe by franchiſe the toil of the laborious, than the perjury of the profligate. Theſe are the ſound doctrines of every wiſe ſtateſman and eminent writer of either kingdom; oppoſed to them are the men who inculcate the dangerous leſſon, that the Church, the State, the Crown, the Empire, and the Conſtitution muſt totter, unleſs they have for ſupporters, a ſlave and a monopoliſt.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

PRESENT POLITICS

OF

IRELAND,

IN A

LETTER

TO

ROBERT SIMMS, Esq.

SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN OF BELFAST.

Published in February, 1792.

X

LETTER

TO

ROBERT SIMMS, Esq.

BELFAST.

I WAS a few days ſince favoured with your letter, incloſing the Declaration and Reſolutions of the United Iriſhmen of Belfaſt, and acquainting me, that I had the honour to be admitted a member of that public-ſpirited ſociety. It was my intention, to teſtify my reſpect by an immediate anſwer. But I was unable to accompany my thanks with ſuch remarks on your inſtitution, and the objects of it, as I wiſhed to offer. Indeed, Sir, I augur well to Ireland from this event; there is a great day ariſing to our country; excuſe me, if I deviate from the ſtrict line of correſpondence to exult at it. It was not heretofore diſgraceful to have been an Iriſhman, becauſe we were ridiculed as uncouth, or calumniated as barbarous. No. Our national character was eſtimable, with all its eccentricities;—the mixture of dignified virtue, and honeſt imperfection, which a great writer terms, "The poeſy

" of a noble nature." But I bluſhed, becauſe we permitted ourſelves to be impoſed on by ſhallow artifices. In the exertions of your ſociety I ſee an end of this illuſion.

To depreſs, what were termed its dependencies, has been a policy too much practiſed by England. The principle has been reprobated by the intelligent writers of the ſiſter country, and pronounced erroneous, not leſs than vicious. Competition muſt exiſt, to encourage induſtry, or rather to call forth latent powers, and exerciſe the ſhrewdneſs of induſtrious men; and it is ſurely better to place the rivalſhip in a country, whoſe ſucceſs, if it ſhall ſucceed, is advantageous to the empire, than in a foreign ſtate of which the wealth and activity will uſually be hoſtile; thus Great Britain loſes in a double proportion, that which is ſubtracted from a friend, and that which is acquired by an enemy.

America and Scotland experienced this treatment, until the former was neceſſitated to ſever itſelf from the empire: and England, dreading a diſunion of the crowns, and the inconvenience, if a hardy and ſpirited people ſhould form a diſtinct ſtate in the iſland, purchaſed the independence of the latter by an ample conceſſion of her commercial advantages. In the former inſtance, the danger of this conduct is illuſtrated; in the latter, we have an evidence that the policy is erroneous, for the local proſperity of Scotland has not interfered with the welfare of any part of England, but on the contrary, has eſſentially augmented the general ſtrength and riches of the empire.

The miniſters of England could not have been ignorant that the plan they purſued was radically wrong; but, miniſters, although they profeſs the contrary, have one concern in general at heart, as much as the performance

performance of their duty. They conſider how they may beſt retain the power they poſſeſs, and how they may render the exerciſe of it moſt commodious; it is more eaſy to be popular in one than in both countries, and popularity in England was more valuable than here. Miniſters diſcerned, and took advantage of the antipathy, which from the civil wars had remained amongſt us; and leaving the Iriſh occupied with the pious care of hating and injuring one another, complimented every Engliſh town with a portion of our intereſt, and every Engliſh favourite with a portion of our ſpoil. Can we blame them? When we offered ourſelves an eaſy prey, it was not to be expected that ſtrangers ſhould ſuffer the opportunity to eſcape, and not turn our fooliſh facility to their own profit.

It was not uſeful to the Engliſh nation, but it was convenient to Engliſh miniſters, perhaps the fault lies nearer home, to detain us in this ſtate of diſunion. To accommodate them, we have divided ourſelves into diſtinct nations. To accommodate them, our country has been impoveriſhed, our manufactures ſuffered to languiſh, our peaſantry kept in want, ſervility, and ignorance. All political morals have been deſtroyed; one party is corrupted by an over-proportion of power, the other by ſlaviſh ſubjection. Writers, even men of information and talents, have diſgraced themſelves to compliment the prevailing party, by delineating a falſe and hideous picture of the Catholics. It has been inculcated, that they are not amenable to any law, not faithful to any engagement, not docile to any government; as if it were poſſible that a few ſpeculative opinions in theology, which have no relation to politics, or common conduct, ſhould ſo confound in an entire people, the natural diverſities of character, that without any difference of ſanguinary or mild, raſh

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or prudent, timid or impetuous, liberal or bigotted, they are ready to attempt the moſt atrocious crimes, and to undertake the moſt perilous enterprizes, and all without the leaſt perſonal intereſt; nay, in oppoſition to every intereſt, but merely to procure church livings for the clergy, and to gratify an idle vanity, which none of them, I believe, feel, that of procuring the precedence of their Religion. Having touched upon this ſubject, I muſt obſerve, that the Iriſh Catholics hold the ſame ſentiments with regard to religious eſtabliſhments, which all men entertain who have experienced the convenience of having lived without them. The lukewarm would not hazard for the church. Men of piety are convinced that an hierarchy, ſupported by voluntary contribution, is more adapted to the purpoſes of religion, than when enervated by opulence. I make this aſſertion from my perſonal knowledge of the Catholics; but on a moment's conſideration, every man will ſee that the fact is conſiſtent with reaſon; the only advantage, (if, indeed, a gratification ſo trivolous can be called advantage) that the Catholics could hope from the legal pre-eminence of their Religion, is the emolument of the Clergy, and the public diſplay of ceremonies. While the Proteſtants continue, what they now are, opulent, powerful, and firm in their religious principles, ſuch an alteration could not be procured without commotion; and is it not ſuppoſing them a race of madmen, to believe, that for ſuch trivial objects they ſhould interrupt the public harmony, in which, as deeply as any other body in the Nation, they are intereſted?

I will alſo remark here, on the general imputations thrown out againſt the character of the Iriſh Catholics, that beſides the hiſtorical facts by which theſe charges are refuted, there is a circumſtance of internal evidence, amounting in my mind to demonſtration, which proves them to have been leſs

vindictive,

vindictive, and leſs ſanguinary than any people amongſt whom foreigners had forcibly obtained a ſettlement. Thoſe who acquired property by the various Revolutions, inſtantly took poſſeſſion of their eſtates, built manſions, and fixed their reſidence. Now unleſs they had a complete certainty that they could live ſecure, they would have taken the precaution to form villages, or towns, or ſome mode of aſſociation for common ſafety; as they did not, I conclude the Natives to have been, even then, peaceable and acquieſcing. In the reign of Charles the Second, the towns were ſo depopulated, that very conſiderable advantages were offered to thoſe who would conſent to occupy them.

To return from my digreſſion. Theſe intrigues were not ſufficient; the Agents, whether foreign or domeſtic, of this ruinous ſyſtem, were aware that a little leiſure for reflection muſt remove our alarms, muſt teach us that it is no way neceſſary to agree in abſtruſe queſtions of theology, in order to purſue our common intereſt, and the intereſt of our country. Deſirous of fruſtrating the poſſibility of accommodating our differences, they called in intereſt to widen the breach which paſſion had unfortunately made, and endeavoured to prevent even the intercourſe of ſocial life, which might tend to mitigate our animoſity. Laws were enacted againſt the Catholics, which Proteſtants had ſtrong temptations to enforce. Upon the Proteſtants was to devolve the entire odium of putting them into execution. When theſe latter had proceeded ſo far as was neceſſary to render them hateful to their countrymen, to adminiſtration was reſerved the grateful duty of interfering with a diſplay of moderation, and of announcing to the Catholics, how much they were indebted to the kindneſs of government for protection againſt the mercileſs proſecution of their fellow citizens. Hence the obſe-

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quious jargon which many Catholics think themſelves bound to uſe; hence the great habits of dependence on government, which that people has contracted. There is no doubt that the Proteſtants of Ireland did ſuffer their Catholic countrymen to receive great obligations from the executive power. The law of Poynings was for many years our ſole protection. Statutes revolting to humanity were ſuppreſſed by virtue of this power. The operation of the exiſting penalties was alſo by the crown not a little mitigated. The government was more wiſe than the Proteſtant people, or its inſtigators. If a different conduct had been purſued, the country muſt of conſequence have been depopulated. Urged as a plea of merit, this moderation is no more than what a Highwayman might offer, that he has not effected all the miſchief he had power to perpetrate;—what Cicero acknowledged to Antony, *latronis beneficium quia me non jugulaverat.* Let it not be inſinuated that I offer this ſtatement as reproof; I am willing to allow liberally for the unfortunate ſpirit that prevailed in Ireland, and to pardon even thoſe who were moſt determined enemies, the errors they retract, and atone for. But whilſt I walk with a reconciled friend over thoſe fields which our ſtrife has deluged with blood, ſhall we not drop a tear at the monuments of our folly? ſhall we not look with regret at the piles of carnage that remain, and derive from them a ſalutary admonition for future conduct?

Every government, except that of Ireland, endeavoured to effect a coalition among its Subjects, when divided by the accidental diverſity of ſentiment, origin, or attachment. When the houſe of Tudor obtained the Britiſh throne, it did not ſeek by ill-timed preferences to perpetuate the antipathy of the rival Roſes. Has not the entire reign of George the Third been occupied in withdrawing the Scotch from their predilection to the family of

Stuart? When the Saxons eſtabliſhed themſelves in Britain; when the northern nations overran the empire; when William the Firſt conquered England, the victorious nations incorporating with the vanquiſhed, manners, races, languages were blended. It is now an hundred years ſince the laſt Engliſh colony ſettled in Ireland, and the races could not early in the preſent century have been more divided, than at preſent. Much of the arcana of this ſyſtem may be ſeen in Primate Boulter's ſtate letters. To prove that it is not entirely exploded, I refer you to that libel on the common underſtanding and information of Ireland, the catechiſm for the uſe of the Proteſtant charter ſchools. Primate Boulter, early in the preſent century, ſpeaking of the tumult relative to Wood's halfpence, ſays, "the worſt of this affair is, that it "unites Papiſts and Proteſtants, and if that reconciliation ſhall take place, there is an end to "Engliſh influence in this country." If Engliſh influence implies the corrupt miſrule, which, in the days of that Prelate, haraſſed Ireland, I truſt there is little doubt that the prediction will be verified. If he deſigned the confederacy of two inpendent kingdoms, of whom the ſtrength is united and the intereſts common; who are ſworn to ſtand or fall together; even in our days, perhaps, it may be found to have been raſhly hazarded; that the unity of the empire can be maintained without the degradation of any of its members; that it may beſt be preſerved by a good underſtanding and harmony, not alone between all deſcriptions of the Iriſh, but between the Britiſh and Iriſh People, purſuing the ſame views, attached to the ſame ſovereign, participating in the ſame conſtitution.

The declaration of the ſociety has with propriety aſſerted, "*we have no national government.*" But ſo ſucceſsfully have deſigning men laboured to embroil us, that I am compelled to rejoice at the

humiliation of my country. In the temper that prevailed, it was fortunate we had been deprived of our national government; if the intrigues of England had not cauſed a diverſion, and prevented the Proteſtants from obtaining the power they might have expected to enjoy, the ſituation of the Catholics would have been deplorable; inſtead of a deſpotiſm ſoftened by modern manners, under which they ſuffered, they would in ſome parts of Ireland have been reduced to a ſtate not differing widely from domeſtic ſlavery. The cares of this country have hitherto, like thoſe of an Inquiſition, been directed to the ſuppreſſion of a proſcribed ſect; and its politics limited, like thoſe of a Monaſtery, to procuring proſelytes. I rejoice that no national Government exiſted, and until I ſee ample ſ curity for future good conduct given, *I ſhall continue not to regret, that there exiſts not a national Governnment.*

It was a great bleſſing to Ireland, that the project of reform produced ſome years back in this country was defeated; it would not have removed corruption, but changed it from bad to worſe, and our ſituation would have been irretrievable, as ſubſequent amendments muſt have become extremely difficult. It is the misfortune of this country, that the number of electors bears no proportion to the population. This reform did not propoſe to increaſe the electors, but to confer additional powers on the preſent exiſting body; the commodity to be bartered would in conſequence have riſen in value, and the temptation to diſpoſe of it become ſtronger. If the Conſtituents were tenfold their preſent number, acts of protection and kindneſs, by which public ſpirit is deſtroyed, could not be offered to all, and for a fraction, it could anſwer no purpoſe to undertake them; in the preſent ſtate of county repreſentation, in vain would country gentlemen endeavour to dictate to their repreſentative;

preſentative; by the ſacrifice of a ſmall annual ſum, he can make ſo many forty ſhilling freeholders, as will render their exertions ineffectual; thus the conteſt is not, who ſhall beſt conſult his country's intereſt in Parliament, but who can procure the greateſt number of indigent Proteſtants, whom he may convert into dependent freeholders. Another inconvenience ariſes from this ſyſtem: the lower order of Roman Catholics are diſcouraged from improving, and diſheartened by the continual preference Proteſtants of the ſame rank obtain over them; and the freeholder becomes indolent, becauſe he ſees an avenue different from induſtry, by which he may attain ſome independence, and a great ſuperiority of importance above his fellows. Equaliſing rights muſt then produce a twofold benefit; diminiſhing the vanity of the poor Proteſtant, and elevating the ſpirit of the poor Roman Catholics; it will leave to both but one honeſt competition---to cultivate and to improve the country.

I will illuſtrate more ſtrongly my aſſertion, that the plan of reform propoſed by Mr. Flood and Mr. Brownlow, from the Convention to Parliament, would have produced a great national calamity. A portion already too powerful, when conſidered with relation to the reſt of the people, was to receive additional aggrandiſement. As the influence of the Proteſtants increaſes, their paſſions muſt be flattered and their intereſt gratified, at the expence, no doubt, of the remaining inhabitants; every animoſity againſt Catholics muſt be humoured, and while the ſects are at variance, we know ſuch animoſities will occur; without preference to an induſtrious or improving tenant, every foot of ground at all valuable would be leaſed to Proteſtants. It was in fact a bill for completing what that abominable Popery code had left unaccompliſhed, for converting the Catholic peaſantry

ſantry into mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, or hunting them into bogs and mountains. If carried into effect, it would have proved an eternal bar to the cultivation of the country; nay, every landlord would have ſuſtained a diminution of his rent-roll. Had the Catholics acted wiſely at that time, or in the manner I truſt they will, if a ſimilar occurrence ſhould again afford occaſion; they ought by aſſiduous application, and a ſtrong petition to Parliament, to have oppoſed the meaſure.

But not alone would this project have proved ruinous to the Catholics; it was inſufficient for the purpoſe deſigned, and to the Proteſtants muſt have been uſeleſs. Boroughs, from dependent, would have become vilely corrupt, and the political morals of the nation have been utterly ſubverted. Let me exemplify this aſſertion, by an inſtance which I ſhall take the liberty to make perſonal, that the evidence may be perſpicuous. Let us ſuppoſe that the Duke of Leinſter (whom every friend to Ireland names with honour) poſſeſſes a power to nominate the repreſentatives of three boroughs. If the plan of reform I allude to had been accompliſhed, theſe boroughs ſhould have been thrown open to the Proteſtant inhabitants; that is, each to leſs than one hundred perſons. Over ſo ſmall a number, the influence of the original patron would not have been deſtroyed, he would only be obliged to increaſe his aſſiduity to individuals, and on the whole adopt a conduct of electioneering ſtratagems. If the electors were compliant, he ſhould be attentive to gratify their private intereſt, and thoſe of their connections; if refractory, by introducing additional Proteſtant reſidents, he could counterbalance them, in either caſe the entire burden falls on the disfranchiſed Roman Catholics.

But grant that the deſign had been accompliſhed, and the borough proprietor ouſted from his

his influence, it does not follow that the elector who obtained these new powers, would be rendered more virtuous by the acquisition: as happens in some instances under your own inspection, the voters being neither sufficiently opulent to resist corruption, nor sufficiently numerous to render individual venality immaterial, representation would become the easy prey of gentlemen, who hire a seat in Parliament in order to retail the use of it. And thus in the room of one honourable person, whose passions, principles, and interest can never differ essentially from those of his country, there would be six supple courtiers, without passion, principle, or interest, except their personal and temporary emolument. Such must be effect of every reform of which the basis is not impartial liberty; and so may every project perish, of which the object is not the diffusion of equal rights through every description of amenable citizens!

It is not alone that these measures were inadequate, to procure the welfare of Ireland; I have strong doubts, as to the propriety of any opposition to Government, unless the interest of the Catholics be included. Who are these presumptuous men who venture to appoint limits for the tide of public spirit, and arrogantly exclaim, "So far "shalt thou go, and no further?" I will not pronounce their conduct criminal, I am sure it is injudicious. Without designing the greatest good of the greatest number, the only motive by which resistance to established order can be justified, they interrupt the confidence that should subsist between sovereign and subject; as if to decoy the Catholics into sedition they pompously detail the advantages of liberty, and teach us to prize as inestimable, that which they are resolved not to communicate; and this conduct is practised in a country, in which the individuals of the proscribed party must encounter the frown of authority, and all

the inſolence of office, when they uſe the common rights, and claim the common benefits of a free ſubject. It is not conſiſtent to upbraid adminiſtration with miſconduct, whilſt the accuſers are guilty of flagrant injuſtice, and uſurp the birthright of their fellow citizens. It is not politic to agitate the queſtion of privilege before three millions of ſpectators irrevocably predeſtined to ſlavery by the political combatants. It is not honeſt to haraſs the country, and impede the operations of Government, for the convenience of a minority. If two thirds of the nation be incompetent to enjoy freedom, thoſe who remain, ſubmitting to the ſtroke of fate which aſſigned to them ſuch unworthy company, ſhould adopt the cauſe of Government with its incroachments and expenditures; every popular harangue, every feſtival of freedom, every commemoration to liberty, is *Brute dormis* to the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

I have been prolix in this diſcuſſion, but I could not better expreſs my grateful ſenſe of the honour done me by the ſociety, than by endeavouring to expoſe the whole extent of the evil you propoſe to remedy. The accidental antipathy of two great parties is endeavoured to be laid down, as a vice inherent in their reſpective natures. Becauſe political prejudices once exiſted between us, (and I hope I have not failed in tracing them to their real origin,) it is inſinuated that they muſt be of neceſſity immortal. At the æra of the reformation, the well-known circumſtances of the reformation itſelf, envenomed the diſſent, which might have otherwiſe been innocent. The civil wars, in this country, prolonged the diſſenſion. But in the name of God, why ſhould difference on a queſtion of religion, more than on a controverted point of metaphyſics or philoſophy, be introduced into politics? Attentive only to the points on which we are at variance, ſhall we never recollect the innumerable

merable articles on which we agree, and look on the goſpel as a covenant of union, not an eternal ſource of heart-burnings, of diſcord, and miſery?--- No; ſtateſmen make of the ſacred writings the uſe as that was formerly upbraided to eccleſiaſtics; "They call down Heaven to divide the earth."* And they receive lectures which they might bluſh to merit, from that order of men heretofore decried in this country, the Roman Catholic Clergy.

It is vainly imagined that the disfranchiſement of the Catholics is the ſecurity of the eſtabliſhment. The Catholics can ſcarcely be expected to look with patience on the church, when, beſides the other inconveniencies, they are informed that its exiſtence is connected with their bondage. If they poſſeſſed every right and advantage the country affords, ſave only eccleſiaſtical revenues, they certainly could not be ſuppoſed ſo inſane as to embroil the ſtate, when, conſidering the power of England, and the ſtrength of the other ſects, they never could hope to ſubſtitute their own to that now eſtabliſhed. The privation of rights is again miſtaken for the cauſe of their ſubjection, it is in fact the effect; there is a remote cauſe, the Catholics of Ireland did not think. It was a wiſe precaution to deprive them of the means of information; but that precaution is now to a certain degree eluded. His Majeſty's Miniſters have it for their conſideration, what means they will deviſe to perpetuate the ſlavery of a people, who have learned their importance in the ſtate, who have begun to communicate with each other on the ſubject of their grievances, and in expreſſing their ſentiments to uſe the freedom of the preſs, a remnant which accidentally eſcaped in the general havoc of their privileges.

* An expreſſion lately uſed in a charity ſermon, by the Rev. Mr. Conolly, an amiable and eloquent Roman Catholic clergyman of this city.

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The Iriſh Catholics have ceaſed to exiſt for the mere purpoſe of profeſſing loyalty and paying taxes. I repeat it again, the Iriſh Catholics have exerciſed their underſtandings; they have thought in the weak addreſſes that have been impoſed on individuals; they have reflected in the ſpirited claim of rights, which theſe addreſſes extorted from every quarter of the kingdom. Thoſe who now enjoy the ſmile of a court, as well as thoſe who meet the frown of authority, and who deſpiſe it, have alike been taught their political importance. The very diſcuſſion which thoſe gentlemen provoked, who call themſelves the friends of Adminiſtration, will, in the end, accompliſh the emancipation of the Catholics. Inſtructed as they have been by this controverſy, it will only be neceſſary to diſabuſe the deluded, they will readily diſcern their real intereſt. Even the injudicious attempts lately made to procure a ſurrender of their remaining rights, will endear to them the ſcanty relic of their father's freedom, the liberty of the preſs, the right of remonſtrance, the privilege of diſcuſſion; entrenching within theſe, they will appeal to their countrymen, for without your aid their emancipation can never be effected. They will not be deterred by the ſenſeleſs howl of ſedition; but let not their enemies cheriſh the idea that they will marr their fair proſpects by any giddy tumult. There is is too much good ſenſe in the Iriſh Catholics to make an attempt, which they are incompetent to accompliſh, and which, if they did ſucceed, would only lay waſte that conſtitution, in which they can acquire, without commotion, a valuable inheritance. But we will reſt upon Remonſtrance the Succedaneum for force which a free conſtitution offers. Upon diſcuſſion, a middle point, between ſubmiſſion to grievances, and exertions to redreſs them: the enemies of Ireland ſhall "hear daggers, though "not feel them." Good ſenſe will at length triumph

umph over bigotry, and every Iriſh Proteſtant, as he loves freedom himſelf, will countenance the honeſt efforts of his countrymen to obtain it. Flapping away thoſe of his *Majeſty's petty officers*, who beſtow the appellation of Rabble upon a gallant people, the Crown will liſten to us, craving as a boon, a portion of that liberty deſigned by Heaven, the common benefit of its creatures, and offering a friendſhip ſolicited in vain by every alien nation, reſerved for the faſtidious rejection of our country. Adminiſtration will liſten to the voice of the ſubſtantial people of Ireland pleading their own grievance, and the miſery of their brethren. If virtuous, it will reſpect property diffuſed; from that ſtate the greateſt number of induſtrious ſubjects receive employment. It will attend, if wiſe, to that order of men who produce moſt Revenue, and whoſe influence is moſt extenſive. If my prophecy be accompliſhed, that an energy of character is now riſing among the Iriſh Catholics, the period of their emancipation is not far diſtant. Whatever degree of ſucceſs await our labours; whatever may be the event of our expoſtulation, to your ſociety and your citizens we muſt ever look with gratitude; we muſt ever recollect, that, for the firſt commiſeration of our ſtate, for the firſt admonition to amend it, we are indebted to you, our ſpirited and philoſophic countrymen.

I have honour, &c.

Dublin, 22d January, 1792,

Robert Simms, Eſq.
Belfaſt,

AN

ESSAY

ON

Parliamentary Reform,

And on the

EVILS LIKELY TO ENSUE

FROM A

REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION

IN

IRELAND.

Publiſhed in February, 1793.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

*Reform of Parliament, &c.**

THE political ſpeculators of the preſent age appear to have divided themſelves into two ſects; of theſe, the one eſtimates very highly, the other moderately, the good qualities of our ſpecies; the former, apparently convinced that honeſty, juſtice, and temperance conſtitute the outlines of the human character, incline to think, that we cannot be too little controuled; the latter, obſerving how frequently theſe virtues are mixed with an alloy,

* This eſſay was written at a time when many republican principles were circulated in Ireland, under the pretext of Parliamentary Reform. A ſociety in Dublin profeſſing that the character of a citizen and ſoldier ought to be blended, publiſhed an exhortation to the people, to revive the Volunteer Inſtitution; and the Belfaſt Northern Star, a paper at that time much read, did not ſcruple to hold out the abolition of taxes, as a conſequence of the reform, and an encouragement to undertake it. It was at the ſame time currently taught, that wiſdom not being hereditary, the Crown and Peerage were improper.

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are deſirous to provide for the poſſible operation of the kindred foibles. The firſt are fond to refer whatever does not coincide with their ideas of right, to the vice of ſyſtems and wickedneſs of rulers; the ſecond, admitting that ſuch accuſations may be, and often are, well founded, attribute general effects to general cauſes; human ſocieties, like him of whoſe nature they partake, are not deſtined for perfection, and like him, are confounded in incoherency when they purſue it. With the former, all arrange themſelves whoſe ſcope of obſervation is not very extenſive, all who have thought little and not profoundly. In this claſs alſo, a benevolent man may find himſelf, eſpecially if he ſhould happen to be alſo a man of not much reflection. But tenderneſs is not always the characteriſtic of this ſect of politicians; ſevere to thoſe below, refractory to thoſe above him, the public ſpirit of the Republican is not unfrequently animated by envy; his deſire of equality ſeldom reaches lower than his own rank; his reluctance to acknowledge a ſuperior is ſometimes, rather inconſiſtently, combined with a repugnance to renounce his own pre-eminence. With the latter deſcription, we uſually diſcern thoſe who having read, obſerved, and inveſtigated minutely, perceive the preſent, rather a cloſe repreſentation of paſt ages, and that the page of hiſtory, like the theatre of politics, is tarniſhed by depravity. Theſe latter are willing to ſtrike a compromiſe, ſacrificing barren rights for productive happineſs. Aware that we muſt be governed, they think the manner of governing a ſecondary conſideration. So far they certainly are right. To enjoy the advantages of order, is the moſt important of all privileges. Liberty is valuable as it ariſes, not as it recedes from it. A mode of government may be had, but an alteration, deſigned to improve, may be ſtill worſe. Although ſpecious in its preſent operation, the remote and collateral effects may be deſtructive

tive. There is a period at which, without rule or precept, men will reſiſt,—when their perſonal ſafety, and the enjoyment of property, have become precarious. But where a Government is tolerable, and the ſecurity it affords complete, extraordinary modes of oppoſition ſhould not be recurred to; its defects, and the probable remedies of them, are ſubjects for ſpeculation. When well aſcertained, they are to be propounded. No man can ſay, that in the conſtitution we live under, any reaſonable propoſition can be ſuppreſſed. Indeed, no reaſonable propoſition can under our conſtitution be finally rejected.

Coercion is the power intruſted to the ſtate againſt the ſubject; Reſiſtance to the ſubject againſt the magiſtrate: To either there is a term, beyond which the firſt is Tyranny, the ſecond Anarchy. An eminent writer has laid down a very accurate diſtinction, when he teaches, that the means ſhould be proportioned to the end, to the urgency of grievance and the advantage of the remedy. In a country conſiſting not of military clans, caſually collected together; but of citizens cultivating the arts of peace, mental refinement, trade and profeſſion, the abuſe muſt be enormous, which can juſtify the overt act of interrupting order: the ſum of taxes impoſed, the degree of influence in the crown, the number of privileges enjoyed by the ſubject, the appropriation of revenue, are very proper ſubjects for parliamentary inveſtigation; but no irregular diſpoſition, ſhort of oppreſſive extravagance, authoriſes the diſſolution of ſociety. When the ſtate is the object of hoſtility, the citizen ends where the ſoldier commences. The right of diſcuſſion, that middle term between reſiſtance and ſubmiſſion, is the great advantage of our free conſtitution; to ſtep over this reſource, and appeal to arms, reſembles the folly of a man, who being at variance with his neighbour about the boundary of a field, ſhould inſiſt on fighting him

him until either fell, rather than bring their pretenſions into a court of juſtice.

That every citizen who has property to defend, ſhould enjoy the full means of protecting it, is indiſputable; but the propriety of publicly regimenting, forms another queſtion, which muſt be decided by circumſtances; it may be laudable, innocent, or criminal. A great deal depends upon the character of the perſons, who chuſe this mode of recreation. At any rate, they are fit objects for police inſpection. But I controvert moſt decidedly the propoſition, which of late has been advanced, that it is proper or eſſential to commit the ſafeguard of the country, ſolely to citizens. Thoſe who aſſume the mixed character, neceſſarily become either bad citizens, or bad ſoldiers; probably both. If they live together ſo much, and for ſuch length of time, as to acquire the habits of obedience which conſtitute diſcipline, they cannot purſue any other occupation, and are loſt to the public induſtry: if they do not, diſciplined invaders will overmatch them. A ſmall ſtanding army, recruited from the people, and officered from the gentry of the kingdom, anſwers both purpoſes more effectually. Its compoſition leaves no apprehenſions to juſt liberty; it ſecures leiſure for peaceable purſuits, and peaceable enjoyments; and the numbers who drop continually off into private life, preſerve in the nation no inconſiderable degree of martial ſpirit. This the quaint jargon, publiſhed in the name of the Society of United Iriſhmen, denominates "*Seduction.*" I conceive the trade of a ſoldier to be alike eſſential as that of a ſhoemaker. It is a part of the diviſion of labour, upon which the fabric of civil ſociety is raiſed, and by the exiſtence of it we are enabled to become a commercial ſtate, not a military Republic. The Gentlemen who ſuggeſt this latter, as an improvement of our condition, may be admirably fitted to ſing together, Oſſian and Oſcar, and Carrol and

Conal, "on the hills of woody Morven;" unfortunately they have come a few hundred years too late into the world. The doctrine is only calculated for that ſtate of ſociety, or for another, from whence it ſeems to have been collected, the little tribes of armed banditti who conſtituted the Republics of antiquity, or perhaps for theſe more modern barbarians, the retainers of the feudal Barons.

It has frequently been aſſerted, that the voice of the people does not carry ſufficient weight, and at preſent the aſſertion is not much controverted. Thoſe who will candidly recur to the real cauſe of this inconvenience, will find the remedy not intricate. The name of people was denied to a majority of the nation; the public voice thus languid, neither procured attention nor deſerved it. If we could reconcile to ourſelves to ſet aſide the religious denomination, to call the Catholic enfranchiſement, reform, and to conſider it merely as adding a number of independent men to the body of electors, we ſhould perceive this meaſure nearly adequate to remove the defect. The amendment propoſed in England by Mr. Flood, which was admitted to have been the moſt unexceptionable ever ſubmitted to Parliament, was not more extenſive. It indeed did not go ſo far; it did not recruit the elective body in corporations. Many deſire a greater extent of alteration; ſome who laſt year thought the Catholics not ſufficiently inſtructed to be admitted to the old Conſtitution, are willing at preſent to turn them adrift into the wilds of Democracy.

If the influence of the people be increaſed, that of the Crown ought not to be diminiſhed; for thus doubly to aſſail the royal authority, converts the kingdom immediately into a Republic; by teaching every man to ſeek his importance principally, if not ſolely from the people, the third eſtate, hurried along by the animated ambition of candidates for diſtinction, muſt ſpeedily overpower both the Crown

and Peerage, and the country is mean while rendered ſubject to all the ſtorms of tempeſtuous competition. We ought rather to take an option between the meaſures. Although there be not a majority continually to counteract the court, a ſituation under which no Government could exiſt; yet if Parliament conſiſt of ſome, who indebted for their political exiſtence to public favour, can never controvert the public opinion; and of others, who from paſſion will oppoſe and inveſtigate; and of a third claſs, whoſe fortunes are involved ſo deeply in the fate of the country, that they are not likely to conſent to a ruinous propoſal; the nation cannot be in better hands, and there is a certainty that it will not ſuffer material detriment. The practice of our conſtitution will then eſtabliſh a ſufficient controul to ſecure Liberty, without becoming too boiſterous to incommode commerce. It appears to me moſt defective, that there are not Merchants in Parliament, who, as well by their influence as information, could protect the trading intereſt.

If the amiable, unfortunate Louis XVI. had fallen by aſſaſſination, princes might have trembled at the example; but the ſolemn perverſion of juſtice under which he was murdered, bears intimidation from the palace to the cottage. He died merely becauſe the name and office of king had fallen into diſrepute, and under pretences, which, if there had even been a colour for puniſhment, muſt be admitted unjuſt, becauſe when the facts were committed, both the name and office promiſed him inviolability. If particular ſituations are ſuffered to be regarded as a crime, it may become a popular faſhion, or a popular phrenzy that rent is unlawful, and a man may be hanged becauſe he had ſucceeded to the inheritance of his father, and levied the produce of it. Who is ſecure, when neither paſt prejudices, nor paſt affection, nor ſtation, nor integrity, nor yet the public faith ſolemnly pledged, can enſure protection?

tion? Sanguinary men, placed beyond their expectation, indulged their vanity in inſolence to their royal maſter. It was the good Antonio in the gripe of Shylock. Pedants in power, confounding the exerciſe of authority with the abuſe of it, imagined that Louis muſt have been what they read that Nero was, and murdered him on ſpeculation; as the poet Cinna was ſlain from the reſemblance of his name to that of Cæſar's enemy. His crime was to have been born to a throne. Any perſon in Europe would have accepted the condition as a boon of Providence; his perſecutors ſearched his conduct for crimes, finding him innocent, they called him tyrant, and killed him. This total ſubverſion of right and equity in France may be traced to two cauſes; firſt, by extending political rights, and above all, the right of interference to men without property, the order of ſociety is exactly inverted; every man is powerful in proportion as he is deſperate. The firſt could not long ſubſiſt without the ſecond, the entire populace of the country is embodied in arms. Even that order which now riots in the fruit of commotion, derives from it little advantage: it has only a preſent and a precarious enjoyment; when a ſettlement ſhall take place, the populace muſt return to its original condition in a ruined country, with depraved characters and frames enervated. The four years which France has waſted in purſuing the viſion of perfection, have produced more general deſolation and individual calamity, than was occaſioned by the deſpotiſm of the preceding century, and the evils have not been mixed with any article of public or private conſolation. When it is replied, that all this cannot be avoided in the courſe of great political changes, I am induced from the juſtification to conclude againſt Revolutions in general, and to ſubmit to the evils I know, rather than to embark in a courſe of deſperate remedy, of which none can determine the end

or conſequences. The Revolution accompliſhed in England in 1688, was commendable; it was conformable to the univerſal wiſh, and produced (ſo far as related to that kingdom) little undeſerved inconvenience. The abolition of deſpotiſm in France ſtands under the ſame apology; if the farther alterations which have taken place in that unhappy country were right, which I am far from thinking, they were not worth the purchaſe paid for them.

"Upon queſtions of reform, the habit of reflec-
"tion to be encouraged, is a ſober compariſon of
"the conſtitution under which we live, not with
"models of ſpeculative perfection, but with the ac-
"tual chance of obtaining a better. This turn of
"thought will generate a political diſpoſition, equally
"removed from that puerile admiration of preſent
"eſtabliſhments, which ſees no fault, and can en-
"dure no change, and that diſtempered ſenſibility,
"which is alive only to perceptions of inconveni-
"ency, and is too impatient to be delivered from
"uneaſineſs which it feels, to compute either the
"peril or experience of the remedy. Political in-
"novations commonly produce many effects, be-
"ſide thoſe that are intended. The direct conſequence
"is often the leaſt important. Incidental, remote,
"or unthought of evils frequently exceed the good
"that is deſigned, or the evils that are foreſeen." I tranſcribe from Archdeacon Paley this ſenſible counſel, it is applicable to this country, and the neglect of the precept has transformed Mr. Paine from a good political writer into an incendiary. He has minutely inveſtigated, and expoſed in an exaggerated picture, the natural imperfections of limited monarchy: a ſolitary obſervation refutes him; that aſſemblage of foibles which he depreciates, has eſtabliſhed public and private happineſs in England. His boaſted ſyſtem of perfection has deluged France with miſery. The infant, upon whom art and anxiety have been exhauſted, often riſes into adult age,

age, feeble and valetudinary. The object of the French Revolution ſhould have been to have ſecured the poor from the oppreſſion of their ſuperiors. This event was accompliſhed when the repreſentatives of the people had organiſed themſelves into a body, regular in its ſeſſion and proceedings. Beyond that point, all innovations have been an idle, wanton, and prodigal expenditure of human happineſs.

The mode of electing members of parliament in this kingdom is poſſibly ſuſceptible of improvement, but ſurely military aſſociations for the purpoſe cannot be commendable. Thoſe who aſſociate may, as they actually did a few years back, happen to light on a very ruinous plan of alteration. And even if the mode they adopt be wiſe, there is more of miſchief in the precedent of arming when we pleaſe, and carrying political queſtions by the bayonet, than there can poſſibly be good in the propoſed amendment. A ſimilar principle applies againſt Conventions. If we could ſummon a Convention like a pariſh veſtry, it might be a commodious mode of collecting the public ſentiment. At home, the effect of the proceeding is, to preſent to the lower orders a proſpect of alteration; abroad we are conſidered in a diſturbed and precarious condition. The firſt injures the police, the ſecond the reputation of the country. Whilſt like England, during the confuſion of the Saxon Heptarchy, the land is parcelled into diſtinct nations, it becomes incapable of exertion. Let us reflect for an inſtant, that we are not an aggregation of hunters, ſavages, or ſhepherds; but a people in an advanced ſtate of ſociety, deſirous of ſecurity and happineſs, both incompatible with theſe tumultous proceedings. We are members of a commercial country, but commerce or manufacture cannot run, if the entire people be kept ſtar-gazing on political phenomena. We are ambitious to cultivate foreign trade, but we can

neither have credit nor connections out of the kingdom, if ſtrangers perceive among us four or five rival governments ready to wage war one with the other. The mercantile intereſt is the ſoul of public proſperity. Gentlemen who amuſe themſelves with politics, ought to take theſe circumſtances under their conſideration. As the frogs in the fable cautioned the ſchool boys, who diſturbed their pond; "what is ſport to them, may be death" to their fellow citizens. We are a commercial, not a military ſtate; and the injury occaſioned, firſt by rendering the credit of the country precarious, and then by diverting the people from their induſtry, are tenfold the miſchiefs which could be inflicted by the moſt corrupt court, and the moſt profligate Parliament. It ſeems to be a good deal forgotten in the rage for conſtitution-making, that the moſt valuable privileges are peace and ſecurity, the certainty that your property, and all the advantages you enjoy, are indiſputably your own, and will be tranſmitted in the order you deſire.

From obſervations on the means of redreſs employed, the tranſition is natural to the grievances which are to be remedied. In arguing theſe queſtions, let me be underſtood not to deny, that the influence of the people in Parliament ought to be enlarged, and that the extenſion of this influence is extremely compatible with the proper balance of power neceſſary to be preſerved in order to avert the evils of Republicaniſm. The excluſion of the Catholics from the privileges of the conſtitution, is a great grievance, and many other ſtill greater grievances ſpring from it. Until this be redreſſed, it is vain to ſeek for improvement of any kind in Ireland; the emigrations to foreign ſervice, the caſt of diſſipation, the idleneſs, the inclination to petty inſurrections, imputed to our national character, are all occaſioned by either the paſt or preſent

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oppreſſions of this ſyſtem. This evil,* we may venture to pronounce, removed; from the enfranchiſement of the Catholics many new relations will ariſe; it would ſeem to me judicious to obſerve the effects of theſe, before we proceed further. There are arguments, which without complimenting the force of them, one finds it difficult to anſwer; of this kind is a late aſſertion, that admitting the Catholics to the right of voting, would only render bad worſe, and furniſh a greater number to be corrupted. If there be corruption in our ſyſtem of election, it proceeds not from any defect in the ſyſtem itſelf; when the independent men of every country are admitted to vote, the very circumſtance which increaſes the number of perſons to be influenced, diminiſhes the value of thoſe who are willing to be ſo. If ſtill the practice of the conſtitution falls ſhort of public advantage, every man who feels the inconvenience, will naturally exert himſelf to remove it. From the errors which have taken place, when the people was imperfectly conſtituted, it is not to be inferred, that like conſequences will enſue in future.

The taxes of Ireland, even compared with its means, are lower than thoſe of any other country. There are certain expences which muſt always be neceſſarily incurred. Theſe are leſſened by our connection with Great Britain. If we had not the protection of a navy, our veſſels could not keep the ſea. The corſairs of Algiers, or any other pirates, would not only pillage our traders, but cut the ſhips out of our very harbours. Without conſuls and ambaſſadors to aſſert the intereſts of our merchants, wherever their goods were landed, they would be ſubject to oppreſſion. If we had not a regular military eſtabliſhment, we ſhould be expoſed to predatory incur-

* Lord Hobart's bill had not paſſed at the time of this publication.

ſions of foreign marauders, and to the ſallies of deſperate banditti at home. Such was the picture which Europe exhibited before the formation of armies and navies; the world was in a ſtate of warfare; the ſea covered with ſavage pirates; every nation expoſed to the ravages of adventurers, foreign and domeſtic. If civil ſociety be good, the protections of civil ſociety are neceſſary. The advantages of civil ſociety are, leiſure for the cultivation of our minds, and peace for the advancements of our fortunes; in both, ſecurity; but among the blunders of Ireland for the laſt half century, it was attempted to work the conſtitution without the moſt eſſential part of the machine; to make liberty circulate through the land, when the vital organ, *a people*, had been forcibly torn from it.

We muſt beſides, at leaſt while we are emulous of affluence and refinement, have magiſtrates for whom ſupport is neceſſary. All theſe expenditures depend on the collection of revenue, the expence of which is to be defrayed; the whole muſt be placed under the ſuperintendence of miniſters, whoſe appointments ought to render them ſuperior to the temptation of treachery or meanneſs. All this is neceſſary, and all this we have much cheaper than any country in the world.

The dangers of this age ſeem to impend rather from the people than the monarch. Monarchy, exactly poiſed, as is that of England, is highly eſtimable. It has all eminent writers on its ſide. But it has more, a double experience juſtifies it; that of England, in which it has produced great good; that of every other form of government, none of which have ever procured permanent and radical happineſs. The oppreſſions of abſolute monarchy, the convulſions of democracy, conſtitute alike the panegyric of the Engliſh Conſtitution. The recent events of France inſtruct us, that the practice as well as the theory is valuable. It is not ſufficient

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that there be a king, the throne will totter unleſs by the means of influence, with which he is inveſted, many are taught to look to the Monarch with expectation and gratitude; hence the neceſſity of a very extenſive patronage. Unleſs he be decorated with ſuperior dignity, opulent nobles will outſhine him in the public eye, and become his competitors; hence the utility of a moſt ſplendid revenue; and there falls one of Mr. Paine's chief arguments for Republicaniſm, that the functions of the Executive Magiſtrate are diſcharged in America, at an expence ſo much inferior to that incurred on the ſame account in England. When Mr. Paine rates at 20,000l. per annum, the expence of the executive government, his ſtatement is unfair; he ſhould have taken into the account all the ſalaries paid throughout the United Provinces, and to foreign ambaſſadors. The different value of money in either country is alſo to be eſtimated, and the habitual frugality of that, compared with the habitual profuſion of this, nation. All theſe circumſtances conſidered, it will appear that the preſident of America has a moſt princely eſtabliſhment, vaſtly ſuperior to that of the firſt executive magiſtrate in Ireland. The diſproportion which the Population of America bears to the extent of Territory, leaves property as yet pretty equally divided. The citizen, whom the choice of his country ſummons to preſide, is, by the circumſtances of the ſelection, ſufficiently elevated above his fellows. In the more advanced ſtate of ſociety, which has taken place in Europe, many are raiſed by their affluence above the law; for the public it is neceſſary that they ſhould have a Paramount. Save only theſe collateral and incidental circumſtances, ariſing from the ſituation of the reſpective countries, the executive governments of England or America need not be rated higher than that of Botany Bay, in which the duty is more ſevere and worſe recompenſed than in

either. Our ſovereign is provided with an ample revenue, not becauſe he diſcharges certain functions, but in order to enable him to diſcharge them effectually.

The influence of the Crown ſo much complained of, is perhaps the greateſt and moſt certain foundation both of happineſs and freedom. The King never can continue the cypher, which powers without influence render him; either popular leaders will dethrone him, or he will league with the very opulent citizens againſt the freedom of the people. In either caſe, the reſult is an unſettled government, fatal to property, deſtructive to trade, ſubverſive of civilization and tranquillity. The King, by his ſituation and inviolability, ſhould be conſecrated, and ſet apart far above all his ſubjects; otherwiſe the envy which pre-eminence excites, would expoſe him to eternal and innumerable difficulties, and compel him in his own defence to become ſevere, crafty, and vindictive. I conſider the French in the murder of their king, to have ſinned as much againſt ſociety by the violation of this rule, as againſt morality and juſtice by the atrocious barbarity of the action. The great advantage of an executive magiſtrate, ſupreme, dignified, and hereditary, being, that by means of theſe very circumſtances, the public tranquillity may be preſerved from the cabals and tumults of unbridled ambition, animated by the poſſibility of attaining that condition, which as it is ſupreme, is alſo moſt envied, unleſs he receive the means of protecting himſelf from intrigue, the deſignation is fruſtrated; he is elevated, but that he may fall in the firſt ſtorm. Here the Conſtituting Aſſembly of France erred egregiouſly, it pared the royal Lion to the quick; the noble animal thus defenceleſs, was hunted by blood hounds to deſtruction.

To our Peerage it has been objected that wiſdom is not hereditary; if the choice in popular elections were

were often directed to the moſt wiſe, there might be plauſibility in the argument; but here, as in moſt other caſes, theoretical promiſe falls ſhort of practical performance. From baniſhed Ariſtides, to Burke decried, and Flood neglected, how ſeldom has the popular voice been juſt and grateful?* The combat of malignity againſt merit is proverbial; the firſt is the moſt ſure criterion of the ſecond. There is no point upon which men leſs agree than upon the degree of eſtimation to be allotted to a contemporary. To cloſe the argument, let us look around; in one inſtance, this country can boaſt itſelf juſt; but how many others may be oppoſed of giddy intereſted preference, even where influence ought leaſt to be expected? It certainly is eſſential that there ſhould be in public life much intelligence, and much talent; but it is moſt ſafe, that property predominate in the legiſlature. In minds eminently endowed, there is often a propenſity to refine, which requires to be counteracted: it is the province of genius to ſuggeſt, but the ſagacity which guided by intereſt, can diſcern and decide, is no uncommon attribute. In the former ſenſe of the term, wiſdom certainly does not deſcend, but the latter quality is diffuſed with little limitation, and is of courſe in no ſmall degree hereditary.

The Peerage moreover is recruited by the frequent acceſſion of the moſt eminent Commoners. Double deliberation is an impediment to the exceſs of influence; it has the advantage of interpoſing delay, and creating caution, both eſſential in the complicated relations of national buſineſs. Theſe intereſts and duties cannot be intruſted to better hands, than thoſe of an aſſembly in which the principal fortunes of the kingdom are collected. It

* Quam aſſidua ſit eminentis fortunæ comes invidia, altiſſimoque hæreat, ex hoc etiam intelligi poteſt quod dum Octavii et Anicii triumphum nemo interpellaret, fuere qui Pauli impedire obniterentur. Vell. Paterculus.

even appears wiſe that the peerage is hereditary; the crown would acquire too much influence by periodical nomination, and if it were elective, the aſſembly would loſe its dignity; which is more important, it would imbibe the ſpirit of popular meetings, the very character which it is the object of the inſtitution to avoid; this Houſe is intended to check in the other the prevalence of that diſpoſition. The power of the Crown to appoint, and the inheritable quality of the Peerage, counterbalance each the other. As the favour cannot be revoked, the dependance of expectation does not exiſt, and that of gratitude is gradually obliterated.

Men, whoſe tempers have been formed under the long and habitual enjoyment of opulence and ſplendour, will ever pretend to ſuperior attention. They will ſeek indulgence at court if the conſtitution withhold it. They will aſſociate to elevate the Crown, unleſs they perceive that more weight and conſideration are derived to them from a limited than an abſolute monarchy. Thus the people by too much parſimony in the article of privileges, may lay the foundation of a formidable league againſt freedom, and by a little conceſſion, acquires a vaſt deal more on the ſide of peace, happineſs, and ſecurity. And the people can well afford to concede, for it only ſurrenders that, which to retain were inconvenient.

It may be ſaid that the argument is in a circle; Monarchy and Nobility proved each by the other. To be more circumſtantial, we will recur to the firſt principle. There has never been an inſtance of an happy Republic in an advanced ſtate of ſociety, nor which amounts to nearly the ſame thing, of a Government extremely frugal. America meets me in both aſſertions; I reply as I have already ſtated, that America pays more than Ireland; her neceſſities, beſides, are leſs than thoſe of

of any European nation, ſhe ſtands aloof from the conteſts and incurſions of all other powers. The very extent of her frontier renders invaſion nugatory; no force can be collected of ſufficient magnitude to make an impreſſion. At an early period of ſociety, 'ere it has been ſplit into inequalities, when the public exigencies require that one be exalted above the community, merit will direct the ſelection. But experience does not more fully juſtify the concluſion, that the oak will ariſe where the acorn has been planted, than this other, that when men ſettle together, they will imperceptibly run into a diverſity of conditions, into indigent and opulent, Dependents and Protectors. The increaſe of population on the ſame extent of territory produces this effect. Nay, there is among us a natural tendency to treat ſome with more reſpect than others. The diſpoſition has been found to exiſt in a ſtate of great ſocial backwardneſs, by the firſt invaders of Mexico and Peru; and by the latter diſcoverers of the South Sea iſlands; in that eſtimable ſociety of the Quakers, every effort of ingenuity has been exerted in vain; in deſpight of all contrivances, the diſtinction of ranks is very fairly diſcernible.

When population has covered the ſoil, and that the redundancy divides the inhabitants of a country, into rich and poor, the former who will purchaſe partiſans, the latter who will ſell adherence; the public ſuffers not leſs from the rivalſhip of ambitious men, than it could from any other dangerous paſſion, which it is the object of civil ſociety to bridle. The ſupreme dignities would not be conferred upon merit, they would become as in the latter ages of the Roman Republic, the reward of intrigue and the prize of the turbulent. The difference of talents, the frugality of this man, the extravagance of that, the ingenuity of ſome, the luxury of others, will occaſion a partial diviſion of

riches.

riches. This inclination to inequality is the ordinary courſe, and muſt be ſuffered to proceed. Any attempt to counteract it, renders property precarious. The principal encouragement to induſtry is the certainty that the fruits of it are completely at the diſpoſal of the acquirer, and induſtrious occupation is eſſential to the happineſs of mankind in general. But, moreover, the buſineſs of reducing every caſual inequality muſt be endleſs, and keep the nation in a perpetual ferment. If commerce could exiſt, or be introduced, commerce would be a nuiſance; for providing an influx of wealth, it would only furniſh new competitors, and additional means of concurrence. In fact, as nations have improved in the ſocial arts, they have declined from the forms of Republicaniſm, they found them incompatible with tranquillity. Carthage was ruined by the factions which aroſe from the want of a preſiding influence. Rome abandoned her liberties in deſpair, after the moſt ſanguinary conteſts ever known in the world. Holland, which was much more adapted by its ſize than Ireland for a Republic, has ſubſided into an ariſtocracy, or rather into a limited monarchy. Inequality of condition is inevitable in ſociety, and the controuled pre-eminence of one remedies the evils ariſing from this inequality. From all theſe reaſons, from the experience of other nations, and the experience of our own, we are led to conclude in favour of a limited monarchy; but it is not alone neceſſary to have a king; he ſhould be inveſted with power and influence ſufficient to keep him ſo. The uſe and advantage of the Peerage follow neceſſarily. In truth, although writers have uſually treated the anecdote as ridiculous, there appears wiſdom in the conduct of that barbarous prince, who laughed when he underſtood that Venice had no ſupreme magiſtrate. Call it King, Conſul, Preſident, or Executive Council, power muſt reſide

ſomewhere. The ſupporters of limited monarchy do not reaſon about the fact of creating this condition, but only about the neceſſity of reſtraining competition in the purſuit of it. They contend that authority is moſt innocent, and patronage moſt uſeful in the hands of a controuled ſovereign. The general order maintained when the late King of France attempted to eſcape, has been quoted to prove the uſeleſſneſs of Sovereigns.* But at that time there could not have been formed any intrigue to ſupplant him.

Diſcourſing of influence, I would not be underſtood to imply approbation of indefinite means of corruption. If it be eſſential for the common good that one ſhall preſide over many, ſome motive of attachment or ſubmiſſion muſt be provided. No man can deny the neceſſity of ſubordination, but each will deſire to be the ſuperior. The public repoſe requires, that this competition be quelled, and the ſenſe of danger or of intereſt are alone competent to effect that purpoſe. Deſpotiſms and Democracies employ the axe, the milder ſway of limited monarchy renders it the ſubject's intereſt to be amenable. Oppoſing an inſurmountable barrier to extravagant ambition, it ſuffers eminent endowments to thrive under its ſhade, extracts from genius the pernicious qualities, and leaves for the uſe of mankind thoſe only which are ſalutary. A great proportion of the perſons who are called on to act in public life, ſhould feel that in conſequence either of their hopes or enjoyments, they are embarked in the ſame bottom with the Sovereign; thus much of that waywardneſs is ſubdued, which the deſire of popularity often produces; they become counſel for the prerogative, and are intereſted to exert in its defence all their addreſs and ingenuity. There is little apprehenſion that their ſcope of indulgence

* By Joel Barlow, Eſq. and others.

will

will be too extenſive; the crown would then be rendered independent of themſelves, and even the man moſt callous to ſhame, and inſenſible to duty and affection, will heſitate when he is to ſubſcribe the death warrant of his own importance.

We have a King, with the quiet, the order, the energy attendant on that ſpecies of government; Kings, in the primitive ſtate, were the fathers of their people, but like other men, they are diſpoſed to incroach, they are liable to aſſume inſenſibly the character of elder brothers. It is neceſſary to uſe precautions with regard to them. We eſtabliſh Parliament, a council in which the acts of the executive magiſtrate are publicly canvaſſed. If there were in Parliament but three men, bold enough to inveſtigate the affairs of ſtate, they controul the miniſter eſſentially; they eſtabliſh over him the cenſorſhip of public opinion. But fortunately we are certain, that he will always have many accuſers, and theſe the keeneſt and moſt vigilant. In a numerous aſſembly all cannot be gratified; it is the intereſt of the diſcontented to detect the errors of thoſe whom they deſire to ſupplant; the one purſues the conduct of miniſters, with the lynx-eyed vigilance of expectation, the tenacity of poſſeſſion prompts the others to uphold him. Between both, the people are ſerved, they are ſecured from incroachment, the expenditure of their money is watched and limited. This is the ſyſtem of rival intereſts controlling each the other, which of late it has been uſual to condemn, but which I adhere to, not perceiving any better way to govern men, than by their common and natural propenſities; becauſe in England where the paſſions have ſcope to play, they do ſo innocently, indeed advantageouſly; and becauſe in France, where it was endeavoured that they ſhould too cloſely be circumſcribed and pent up, after many convulſive ſhocks, they burſt at length in a ruinous exploſion. And here I reluctantly

diſſent

diſſent from my friend, whoſe brilliant defence of the firſt French Revolution has procured the applauſe of Europe. Mr. Mackintoſh "tranſlating the queſtion into familiar language," aſks, "whether the vigilance of the maſter, or ſquabbles of the ſervants, be the beſt ſecurity for faithful ſervice?" If the maſter be not in a condition immediately to inſpect his own affairs, he cannot be better ſecured than by the diverſity of intereſts among thoſe whom he muſt confide in. And I inſiſt that it is cheaper for the people to pay in taxes, ſomething more than what is neceſſary, than to have the country diſturbed, and public induſtry interrupted by very tumultuous and very frequently recurring elections. But I only criminate the exceſs, that there ſhould be ſome, and theſe very popular, is neceſſary, in order to keep alive the inſpecting ſpirit of the people, and to preſerve the great eſſentials of freedom from violation; theſe are the equal diſtribution of juſtice, (the only uſeful or rational equality;) the Habeas Corpus, and trial by jury; the perfect freedom of perſon and property.

The example of America, and the ſmall expence of the Republican ſyſtem, are the principal arguments of Mr. Paine and his adherents. There are ſome expences inevitable; there are others, matters merely of patronage, which are expedient or even ſalutary. Theſe are interwoven with our free Monarchical Conſtitution, are neceſſary to give the Monarch an intereſt in the Government, and, indeed, are almoſt the only price we pay for his interference; all who endeavour to reduce the expences of the ſtate very low, are, many perhaps unknown to themſelves, the advocates of a Republic; for ſuch in fact, and in inconvenience the Government will be, if the Crown be eſſentially enfeebled, and if public men conſider popular favour their

ſole reward and object. Many occurrences ariſe in public life, in which that man is incompetent to act with firmneſs and diſcretion, whoſe actions muſt vary with the breath of popularity. The people, it is true, ſeldom judges ultimately wrong, but as ſeldom are its firſt impreſſions right, or proceedings grounded on them judicious. In the general collections of men, the moſt ſenſible are the moſt acquieſcing; the intemperate moſt forward; the current of applauſe uſually wafts the vehement to the goal, and confers the prize of momentary eſtimation on the wildeſt and fierceſt, or as they are termed, the boldeſt meaſures. He who lags to reflect, or ſolicits breathing time, is joſtled from the courſe without retroſpect to the merit of paſt, or attention to the means of future ſervice. This is a tolerably accurate repreſentation of what has happened in France, it is that which ever has, and ever will take place where the diverſified gradations of influence are abrogated. Woe to him, who committing himſelf to that boiſterous and uncertain element, *the Many*, is obliged to vary with its fluctuations, and to accommodate his conduct to all its inconſiſtent viciſſitudes. Woe to the country in which ſuch men, and ſuch views prevail! What heavier malediction could be impoſed upon any land, than that its rank and talents ſhould, precarious in ſituation, be rendered deſperate in principle? If genius be neceſſitated to ſeek eſtimation, by goading the public mind, by ſtimulating its appetites, and miniſtering to its caprices, there are men the moſt praiſe-worthy, who will abandon the career; but there are others who will therefore toil in it with redoubled aſſiduity. The Crown and the Peerage, prerogative and pre-eminence, both expoſed by their very nature to jealouſy, and yet more invidious, when a certain degree of influence does not protect them, would ſink in the unequal conteſt with antagoniſts ſo formidable; better at once

once bluntly aboliſh Royalty, and endeavouring to ſettle the country under a new form, ſpare the convulſive agonies of expiring Prerogative. Better cruſh the venerable ſyſtem in its Palace, than expoſe its debility to public deriſion; like decrepid Priam, leaning on the altar, aiming the dart, to which his feeble arm cannot give force, a victim devoted to the ſword of the firſt pitileſs aſſailant.

To taxes, as to all things elſe, there muſt be limits; but taxation, in itſelf, may not alone be allowable, it may be neceſſary; in a populous country, when the neceſſaries of life are remarkably cheap, the inhabitants are by the facility of ſupplying their wants, rendered idle and diſſipated; when the labour of three days may obtain the ſuſtenance of ſeven, a man will continue during the remaining four inactive. This cuts double, both againſt himſelf and againſt Society. He acquires a bad habit during his indolence. He is perhaps engaged in debauch. He returns reluctantly to his employment, and at length becomes depraved entirely. Rent is a kind of a tax; in ſeveral parts of Ireland, the rents have been tripled, nay, quadrupled within forty years paſt. And this was not ſo much the effect, as the cauſe of national proſperity; for the great wealth of a country may frequently lie dormant, if the inhabitants reſiding liſtleſly upon the ſurface, will not exert themſelves to inveſtigate its reſources. Before the above-mentioned period, when rent was very low, and other taxes little known, half the year was laviſhed in carouſing. But ſo ſoon as labour became compulſory, fortunes have been raiſed both for the tenantry and landlords, and the civilization of the country has advanced materially. It cannot be ſaid, that any claſs of men, or branch of manufacture languiſhes in this country under national impoſts. Theſe fall on the ſuperfluities, not on the neceſſaries of life, a reduction of them would not augment the poor man's comfort,

but the conſumption of the opulent, and this extraordinary conſumption would not be beneficial to the country, for the objects on which it would fall are foreign produce. I enter into this detail, not as defending local impoſitions, which are frequently exorbitant and uſeleſs; not as juſtifying any particular degree or arrangement; but in ſome attempts made to inflame the minds of the lower orders, before the ſitting of Parliament, it has been very boldly advanced, that taxes would be removed of courſe, if the manner of electing members of Parliament were altered; it is therefore neceſſary to enforce a truth, that taxes and civil ſociety are mutually neceſſary to each other, and that the former make none, or at leaſt a ſmall part of the grievances of the Iriſh peaſantry. Conſuming little of what is liable to taxes, they pay indirectly ſcarce any contribution; and it has been announced, that they are to be relieved from the hearth money, the only direct tax paid by them; there are few public regulations to which the feeling mind will more readily offer the tribute of applauſe, than to the abrogation of that paltry ſubtraction from miſery, little to the ſtate, and much to the wretch who yields it.

To any perſon who will take the trouble to contraſt the diſtricts of Ireland inhabited by Proteſtants, with thoſe in which a Catholic peaſantry is moſt prevalent, no doubt can remain, that all exiſting evils may be referred to the direct or indirect operation of the Catholic excluſion. I impute not any thing to the national character, nor do I impeach individuals, but I apply to Ireland a general remark, which may be found in every political writer; when the gentry feel not any neceſſity to court the favour of their inferiors, they are deficient in offices of protection and tenderneſs. Without undertaking to point out the man, or the body of men

who have been the authors of ſpecific miſchief, I aſſert that the peaſantry has melted under this ſyſtem, and cannot revive, until it be previouſly aboliſhed. To the univerſal rule there are eſtimable exceptions, as there are brutal exceſſes which proceed beyond it. Under the ſame climate, rather better circumſtanced in point of ſoil, with this ſingle difference in internal regulation, whilſt Ulſter has riſen into a garden, the other Provinces have degenerated to deſarts. Let us not hear the imputation of natural and habitual indolence; indolence in the people is ſymptomatic of a vicious form of Government, and as it never adheres to the emigrants from this iſland, reflection cannot be deceived in inveſtigating the real cauſe of it. When I offer this remark to the learned author of a late treatiſe, who has concluded erroneouſly, from very juſt principles, it may prevent the neceſſity of a more elaborate refutation. I heartily coincide with him on the ſubject of virtual repreſentation, but the Catholics are not repreſented virtually. The very ſtatutes they complain of prove it. The privilege of voting may be diſpenſed with, when no law can be enacted, from the operation of which the legiſlator may withdraw himſelf. But the deſignation, Roman Catholic, not only may, but has been uſed as a partial deſcription, and regulations framed under it, which do not affect the lawgivers; in this caſe, according to every rational rule of virtual repreſentation, Catholics either ought to ſit in Parliament, or to enjoy over the lower Houſe the controul which is given by election. The latter is not, as Mr. Sheridan thinks it, power; it is protection. Not the gratification of ambition or vanity, but eſſential to the exiſtence of the Catholics, and to the cultivation of the kingdom; whilſt the boroughs are preſerved even under any variations of the landed property, the right of voting for repreſentatives conceded to the Catholics, can affect them as individuals only

only, not as a body. It never can exalt the ſect into rivalſhip with the eſtabliſhment. When Mr. Sheridan has conſidered more minutely his project of a ſeparate Repreſentation, he will find the diſcuſſion of it needleſs; inſtead of conſolidating us into one nation, it would create an eternal barrier of ſeparation. But let the Catholics be mixed in the maſs of conſtituents, and in the general occupations of the country. The bounties on tillage have advanced the proſperity of Ireland, this bounty on the growth of man will complete it. Four words will mark the ſeries of cauſe and effect. Protection, Comfort, Population, Manufacture.

We are, indeed, peculiarly well circumſtanced in Ireland. We have the advantages of a limited monarchy, without incurring any thing near the degree of expence, which in other countries is annexed to the maintenance of Royalty. This is the fair manner of conſidering our ſituation; it ought to be contraſted with thoſe neighbouring nations whoſe ſtate of ſociety requires a monarchical conſtitution. With Great Britain, with Spain, or even with leſs extenſive realms, Portugal and the northern kingdoms. Not alone what we pay ſhould be taken into the eſtimate, but what we enjoy. For inſtance, a frugal Deſpot may contrive to impoſe upon his ſubjects a ſum, not by one half equal to the expences of our Government. We may nevertheleſs be ten-fold more rich and thriving than his ſubjects; and if the option were offered, we ſhould prefer to increaſe our taxes conſiderably, rather than exchange conditions. Deſpotiſm is ſo much leſs complex than limited monarchy, that if any attention be given to expenditure in a ſtate of the former deſcription, the people may be directly leſs burthened, but will be oppreſſed a vaſt deal more indirectly. Although theſe governments do not exact, they deſolate. There are many things, which it is better to pay for, than to want, and which even calculated upon a plan of

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œconomy, we may afford to purchaſe highly. Of this nature, as contraſted with the ſurrounding Monarchies, is *Liberty*. Of this nature, as contraſted with America, is our limited royalty, a condition in the advanced ſtate of ſociety inevitable. I repeat it again, no compariſon is fair, which does not include the entire caſe of both parties. If our Government even were vaſtly more expenſive than that of America, both our means and our neceſſities are greater. The exceſs would be no cauſe of wonder, the reverſe is matter of congratulation. A man, ſix feet tall, would be conſidered unreaſonable if he ſhould repine, that his clothes coſt more than thoſe of a pigmy. The public roads * of this country are kept at a very great expence, much higher, I apprehend, than neceſſary; even ſo, it is leſs hurtful to preſerve, than to neglect them, and better to pay for the ſervice, than that the labourers ſhould, as in France, be compelled at the diſcretion of public officers, to repair the highways, indiſcriminately in the ſeaſons, in which labour is moſt pernicious to health, or moſt precious to the individual. A farmer caſting his eye over the public diſburſements of old France might exclaim, happy country! not a ſingle item for that charge which preſſes upon us ſo heavily; but he would be readily undeceived. That perſonal attendance to keep up the roads which the French were not permitted to commute, was the moſt oppreſſive grievance in the country. It appears at firſt view tolerably evident, that the inhabitants of every diſtrict can protect and keep it quiet; and many cenſure as an impoſition, the hiring men to diſcharge this duty. On a ſecond glance, the aſſociations which muſt be formed for the purpoſe, will appear to be attended with charges more extravagant. They oc-

* A great part of the public roads in Ireland are kept in repair by county ceſſes.

caſion

caſion expenſive meetings, divert the people from buſineſs, and promote idleneſs; if the men whoſe time is valuable, were to ſubſcribe to a fund, the incidental expences of aſſembling frequently, it would appear that they might make a clear profit of the value of their time, and that of the perſons they employ; and all the idlers of the country might be kept under diſcipline, for the mere charges of public meetings. A cutler who proceeded on a plan of ſaving, to make a pair of boots, would find himſelf in the end a conſiderable loſer, for by attending to the trade at which he was expert, he might have amaſſed during that period infinitely more than the amount of his œconomy. Civil ſociety, like the animal frame, is a complicated ſyſtem of mutual relations and dependence. He muſt caſt an eye over the entire maſs, who deſires to correct a part of it. It is not enough ſingly to conſider Ireland a country ſubject to a monarch, or connected with the ſiſter kingdom, or a candidate for trade and manufacture, or regulated by a Repreſentative, or ſwayed by an Ariſtocratic body, the entire controuled by the ſuperintendance of an intelligent people; all theſe parts muſt be regarded as contributing to conſtitute one great whole, and where any member of the integrant is reprehenſible, it ought to be viewed with reference to the remainder. Aſſociated in confederation with another great kingdom, Ireland enjoys advantages which ſhe could not in her iſolated condition pretend to. Whoever eſtimates the neceſſaries with which a commercial ſtate muſt be provided, will perceive that if the connection were diſſolved, or if we adhered ſo looſely to England, that ſhe ſhould learn to conſider us a ſeparate nation, the expence of a diſtinct Government would amount to much more than our preſent Revenue. As the Crown is the great bond of union between the ſiſter nations, the meaſures which tend to diminiſh its influence,

ſhould

ſhould not be entertained without caution and delicacy, for the adheſion of the Empire gives way as the royal authority is enfeebled.

It is a queſtion, whether America has gained, but beyond diſpute, the mother country has not ſuffered, by the ſeparation of the Colonies.* If the United States, like Ireland, were only to derive a new form of internal Government from the rupture, without doubt they would have been conſiderable loſers. The mother country was at the entire expence of protection, and never was any Government ſo frugal. The truth is, the civil war in America, and the conſequent diſſolution of the connection with Great Britain, proceeded from the prevalence in the Colonies of that Republican ſpirit, and Republican Conſtitution, which many deſire at this day to introduce in Ireland. The firſt emigrants were permitted to organiſe themſelves on a plan ſo very democratic, that the King in many provinces was only titular, and had leſs weight than the Preſident at preſent. The Colonies were in reality commonwealths under the protection of England, and the removal of the royal authority was occaſioned by circumſtances ſimilar

* Mr. Paine, whoſe eſtimate is more likely to be under the truth than to exceed it, rates the taxes of America at 5s. per head. I underſtand, that the public revenue of Ireland amounts to about £.1,400,000 ſterling annually, and the population to near five millions of inhabitants. Thus the Iriſhman does not contribute ſo much as the American: but, conſidered in another light, he pays not above one half; 5s. in that country, will purchaſe as much of any commodity, and is therefore equal to 10s. in Ireland. The true manner of deriving information from a compariſon with America, is by collating the expences of the preſent Independent Government of America, with thoſe incurred when ſhe was allied to Great Britain. We are informed by Dr. Smith, that the entire expence of the American Colony Government before the war, was no more than £.64,700 per annum. Speaking of the little detriment England ſuſtained by the loſs of America, I muſt not be ſuppoſed to include the expence of the laſt war.

to thoſe which ſubverted the labours of the French conſtituting aſſembly. In moſt Colonies, a number of public officers were nominated by the people; thoſe of whom the Crown preſerved the appointment, were ſent from England. There was of courſe little to aſſuage, and every thing to exaſperate the aſperity men uſually entertain againſt that pre-eminence in which they do not participate. The Americans procured what we enjoy, trade and domeſtic taxation; on the ſide of protection and œconomy, they loſt conſiderably. Mr. Paine having America conſtantly in view, reaſons uniformly wrong, for he ſuppoſes uniformly, that every other country is in the ſame circumſtances. Six words refute him completely, *There is no mob in America.* There are yet in that country but two claſſes, thoſe which correſpond to the middle gentry, and to the yeomanry of England. The population of the States not affording ſuch a number of hands, that ſome find it neceſſary to miniſter to the indolence of others, every man is occupied, and there is not leiſure for the ſpeculations or the contentious paſſions which diſtract Europe. Thus the caſualty of the moment renders America the moſt eaſily governed country, and guarantees her from the imperfections of Republicaniſm. She has few ſufficiently idle to purſue ambition, ſufficiently rich to bribe, or poor to be corrupted. But the ſeries of cauſe and effect which lead to the diſſolution of the American Democracy, or at leaſt to alter it materially, may be eaſily traced by any man of diſcernment.

They delude egregiouſly, who repreſent, and they err egregiouſly who believe, that the Conſtitution of America is formed after the models upon which we have been deſired to correct our Government. The internal regulations of the reſpective States, and of the entire confederation, are in every perſon's hands; whoever will look into them, muſt admit,

admit, that they are founded, not on the rights of man, but on the accommodations of ſocial life. The entire ſyſtem labours to palliate, what it cannot remedy, the miſchiefs of Democracy. So cloſely have the legiſlators of the new world adhered to the Britiſh ſyſtem, that the omiſſion of the King's name in public acts is the only difference diſcernible. The American Preſident, whilſt in office, is a limited monarch; the American Senate a temporary Peerage. The latter are not ſtiled My Lords, and the addreſs of the former to the Aſſembly is, "Fellow Citizens." Then one diſtinction only remains between our ſituation and that of America; there the Supreme Executive Magiſtrate is named by popular choice; we are aware, that in the circumſtances of our country, every election would produce a civil war, or a ſtate of tumult nearly as deſtructive; that in the intermediate periods, the Government would be feeble, irreſolute, and uncertain; the country a ſcene of acrimony and cabal, revenge, and retaliation; public proſperity at a ſtand, and private happineſs poiſoned. But it is farther worthy of remark, that ſuch is the palpable excellence of our inſtitutions, that they were cloſely followed by a nation not favourably diſpoſed towards the country it copied; a nation which was perfectly free to chuſe, and which did chuſe after the moſt full deliberation.

I cannot diſmiſs the ſubject without endeavouring to diveſt Republicaniſm of its laſt pretenſion to excellence. It is a condition not either of virtue or of juſtice. The anecdotes of Roman or Grecian heroiſm, which in youth impreſs us forcibly, will be found on a compariſon of other circumſtances in the age, to have taken place when the actors were not ſo much refined as the Indian Americans at preſent. The moſt bloody war undertaken by Sparta, was alſo the moſt unjuſt. It was to ſcreen from puniſhment a member of its own ſtate,

who had defrauded and murdered a citizen of Meſſene. The Roman hiſtory preſents at every inſtant atrocious acts of tyranny and abuſe of power, in the treatment of ſlaves, allies, or provincials. The recital uniformly concludes with the picture of ſplendid impunity. The Patrician Government of Rome was very defective, but yet was better than the popular Conſtitution which ſucceeded to it. Whilſt the former continued, the blood of a citizen was never ſhed in Rome; from the time of the Gracchi, when firſt ſhe witneſſed the mutual aſſaſſination of her children, to the overthrow of the Republic, Rome was a ſcene of contention and carnage.

There can be very little of Republican deſign in Ireland; the wretched ſpeculations which involved France in calamity, can have few admirers. There is great internal evidence to reconcile this nation to the monarchical ſyſtem; in corroboration of ancient habits, there are ſtrong motives of perſonal affection to the King, which ſhould at preſent attach to it a conſiderable party. We have nothing to dread from direct Republicans; but ſomething is to be apprehended from the error of thoſe, who, purſuing meaſures which render the prerogative too feeble, would precipitate themſelves finally, perhaps imperceptibly, into that inconvenient, that boiſterous form of government. It may not be uſeleſs to call the attention of ſuch perſons,* from the immediate, to the incidental effect of their proceedings. It is not enough to talk of Parliamentary Reform in general terms, ſome ſpecific plan ought to be propoſed, which the mind ſhould reſt on. A change in the repreſentation may be the greateſt

* It may be neceſſary to notice here, which I before caſually omitted, that my remarks on the formation of Conventions cannot include the late meeting of the Catholic Committee, which from ſome circumſtances of reſemblance has received that appellation.

poſſible

poſſible good, it may be alſo the greateſt poſſible evil. By diminiſhing in an extreme degree the influence of the Crown, it may convert the country into a Republic; by narrowing too much the repreſentative body, an inſolent Ariſtocracy may be eſtabliſhed in every diſtrict. The monied intereſt, which is riſing rapidly in Ireland, may be deprived of all weight whatever. If the repreſentation be very popular, and the elections be frequent and tumultuous, neither trade nor manufacture can be carried on, and the people will become like that of ancient Rome, idle, ſeditious, expecting its ſupport from the bounty of candidates, until at length, like that Republic, the opulent diſguſted, and the neceſſitous overwhelmed in corruption, a ſyſtem of vexatious freedom will be abandoned entirely. The project of the French Conſtitution failed in ſome meaſure, becauſe the original legiſlators did not make ſufficient allowance for the paſſions, which operate in an advanced ſtate of ſociety; they might alſo have erred on the contrary extreme, and have left the ſcope for influence too extenſive. The people are diſpoſed to conſider with great, and frequently with well-founded jealouſy, thoſe who are elevated to authority; yet unleſs popular favour lead to the gratification of liberal ambition, no man of eminent endowments will ever be ſolicitous to attain it, and the court will have a monopoly of the talents and literature of the nation. If perſons of high birth and fortune are pinched too cloſely by democratic manners and regulations, they will take refuge with the ſupreme power, and incline with all their influence to the ſupport of abſolute authority. Men educated with a certainty of poſſeſſing hereditary affluence, are ſeldom thoſe who ſuffer their talents moſt completely to expand, and their underſtandings to attain the extreme of cultivation. Men of talents are neceſſary for the management of popular aſſemblies, they are the ſafeguard of the

people, but in general they cannot procure admiſſion into Parliament, unleſs under the patronage of influence. This formidable order, which never works in vain upon the public mind, will be the foe, when it is not the auxiliary of liberty; no devices will exclude it from public buſineſs, and if the men of rank and men of talents are compelled to join the court in a conſpiracy againſt freedom, no ſyſtem of democracy will be able to withſtand the coalition. All theſe diſcordant views and intereſts are to be compared and adjuſted, before our repreſentation be amended. The improvement of our Conſtitution furniſhes, without doubt, excellent room for ſpeculation. But it is a matter not to be eaſily decided, and may be preſſed improvidently and prematurely. It does not appear that when a grievance really exiſts, and is perceived, any one time can be more proper to urge the conſideration than another. The deſign of a party may have ſeaſons of convenience; but the grievance of a people ſeriouſly felt by the ſober part of it, will ever create its own opportunity of redreſs. No government can conteſt with its ſubjects a matter of regulation ſufficiently important to be ſtrenuouſly urged, and on which the utility of conceſſion is acknowledged univerſally.

On this ſubject it is moſt eaſy to determine what it would be inconvenient to remove. The project of aboliſhing forty ſhilling freeholders, which in the crowd of current ſchemes has been of late hinted, appears exceptionable. The admiſſion of all perſons indiſcriminately to the exerciſe of political power, muſt neceſſarily produce the ſubverſion of ſociety.* For ſtrictly ſpeaking, ſociety is the combination

* I have here again to encounter Mr. Sheridan, who having honoured me with the epithets of "ſenſible and moderate," proceeds by means of a ſimple proceſs, cutting a ſentence

bination of thoſe who *have*, againſt thoſe who *have not*. But it is extremely expedient that ſome, not too many, from humble life, ſhould enjoy a privilege, which creating a dependence of their ſuperiors, may communicate a firmneſs of character to the one, and ſoften in the others the arrogance of proſperity. Moreover, in manufacturing diſtricts, and ſuch I hope every county in Ireland will 'ere long be, the forty ſhilling freeholders are connected with the trading, and counterbalance the more opulent farmers who are influenced by the landed intereſt. And I apprehend that thoſe in the

tence in the middle, to make me deliver doctrines the reverſe of my own opinions, and of which the author ought to be held mad and intemperate. From that period at which I had the good fortune to give to the public mind the firſt impulſe on the Catholic buſineſs * to the preſent hour, which juſtifies and crowns my expectation, I have argued the queſtion more extenſively than moſt perſons out of Parliament; in the different eſſays that bear my name, and in the papers, which I prepared at the requeſt of public bodies, and which were adopted by them, the elective franchiſe has never been repreſented—as the general right of man, but as a privilege growing out of the conſtitution; and the unqualified excluſion of all the Catholics, not as a ſtate of ſlavery, a rant of political pedantry, which I reject, but as a very inconvenient ſituation, ſevere to the parties deprived, uſeleſs, nay, pernicious to the country which deprived them. This gentleman's propoſal to confer civil offices upon the Catholics, and reſerve the privilege of voting, is, "like giving one ruf-"fles, when wanting a ſhirt:" he cannot be ignorant, that without political influence, there is not much opportunity for obtaining civil employment.

That to elect members of Parliament is a conditional privilege, not an abſolute right, is the leading aſſertion of that pamphlet which Mr. Sheridan favoured with his notice. From what part of it he collects occaſion to include me in the ſneer of "theſe theoriſts," I am at a loſs to determine: I can only diſcern between his theories and mine, a ſingle difference, that his are leſs accurate. He has reviewed with yet more apparent harſhneſs, a diſcourſe delivered in the Catholic Convention; the author of which, Dr. Mc. Neven, a man of taſte and erudition, both diſplayed in that performance, merited at the hands of a ſcholar, a leſs coarſe treatment.

* By the publication of the Declaration, p. 71.

north

north of Ireland, who hold the privilege of voting by this tenure, would not be inclined to forego the exerciſe of it.

In matters of government, little reliance is to be placed on human ingenuity. Equal good has not reſulted from any form, as from the patch-work conſtitution which accidentally aroſe in England. Methinks at this inſtant, cauſes little obſerved, effects tacitly produced, are operating great reforms in Ireland. We impute too much to the boroughs. They are certainly more in number than any policy can warrant. And the accumulation of many in the hands of individuals, gives more influence than perhaps ought to belong to a ſubject. But the apathy of the people, and the converſion of ſeveral counties to cloſe repreſentations, have been much more fatal to independence; of theſe, the former was an indirect, the latter a direct conſequence of the ſyſtem of Catholic excluſion. In many counties, a great proportion of the men of property were diſfranchiſed under pretext of religion; it naturally enſued that the elections could not be exempt from influence. In fact, a multitude of the conſtituent body became placemen or expectants, and the repreſentative was obliged to connect himſelf with Adminiſtration, in order to fulfil his engagements. The north of Ireland, uſually jealous of the Court, attributed its influence to cloſe corporations; the Proteſtants, in the Roman Catholic counties, voted for the powerful candidate, accepted preferments, muttered about freedom and corruption, voted again and kept the ſecret; or, indeed, contributed to ſhift the odium upon their neighbours. The moſt uſeful and independent men who ever ſat in Parliament, would have been loſt to their country, if there had been no other mode of admiſſion but by open canvaſs and election. It is true, there is not any ſtrict principle of juſtice, which aſſigns to one diſtrict a right

right in preference to another. But in Politics we muſt often receive "the *expedient*," as conducing "to the *right*," and reſt content with remote good conſequences. The deſcription of men, returned from Boroughs, ſeems to be in ſome caſes more grievous than the mode of nomination. The ſupreme Legiſlature of a trading country ought to contain ſome Merchants, and not ſo many Barriſters. Gentlemen whoſe fortunes and talents are in a ſtate of mediocrity, may perhaps have no other view than the public good; but if they advance a large premium, the malignant world will judge otherwiſe. The chiefs of the bar may be excuſed; the country has little to dread from the effects of liberal ambition. Such men cannot benefit themſelves, without having firſt rendered eſſential ſervice to the Community; and even in power, an enlarged mind will never diveſt itſelf entirely of opinions favourable to freedom, nor be able to contemn the public eſtimation. The rich man is not formidable, who purchaſes a ſituation flattering to his vanity, by a ſum he can afford to loſe, and which he chuſes thus to diſſipate. Theſe alone are to be dreaded, who cannot poſſibly have any view, but the ſpeculation of pecuniary barter. It is ſaid that mercantile information can be had at the bar of the Houſe, and in private converſation: true, but it may not always be called for; and even when it is, will not carry ſo much weight as if a reſpectable member, perſonally intereſted, announced his ſentiments. When Sportſmen in Parliament can procure laws for the protection of their dogs; Merchants and Manufacturers might be expected to attract not a little attention. It is to be wiſhed, that reſpectable Traders ſhould be introduced into Parliament, were it only to eradicate that feudal, barbarous notion, diſgraceful to a civilized people, which from late occurrences ſeems ſtill to linger in this kingdom, that the mercantile is leſs honourable

than other occupations. A Merchant or extenſive Manufacturer, as he gives employment to a great number, is the moſt uſeful; and as his purſuits require a very conſiderable degree of underſtanding, ought to be one of the moſt reſpected perſons in ſociety. In the neighbouring Monarchies, to have excelled in commerce, was eſteemed a good, in ſome inſtances a ſufficient cauſe for conferring the rank of Nobility. In Ireland one would ſuppoſe that to be engaged in trade was conſidered by ſome a reaſon for diſfranchiſement. It matters little how men are appointed to ſeats in Parliament, provided they be eminent and deſerving perſons ſelected from the different profeſſions of importance. This, in fact, and not the parcelling the country into diſtricts of nominally equal importance, is a fair and impartial repreſentation. Of all modes ever deviſed, this latter appears moſt exceptionable. It would veſt the dominion of the kingdom in the hands of mere country Gentlemen, to the eternal excluſion of the monied and learned claſſes. If either Hume or Monteſquieu were at this day an inhabitant of Ireland, he would not be elected by a county in which he had not an eſtate. Such is in general the narrow pride and jealouſy of the landed intereſt. Unleſs a number of boroughs, with all their imperfections be preſerved, I do not diſcern by what means monied men, the natural guardians and ſuperintendants of the riſing proſperity of the country, can find acceſs to Parliament. Perſons of very large floating property may not, and probably will not have ſo much perſonal influence as will enable them to carry a ſingle election. If they even had, the habits of canvas are inconſiſtent with the avocations of a man of buſineſs; and in the intrigues of canvas, a pert barriſter, not two months in the hall, would be ſuperior. Even in cities, the trading intereſt, although weighty, does not predominate in the elections. The ſway in theſe

uſually devolves upon the Demagogue in faſhion. If the number of county repreſentatives were increaſed, the influence of men of large landed property would either ceaſe or continue. In the latter caſe, the increaſed number of repreſentatives would enable them to carve out the repreſentation more to their mutual ſatisfaction. In the former, which of the two is infinitely leſs likely, the returns would conſiſt nearly of that deſcription of gentlemen, who at preſent form the Grand Juries; many of that claſs ought to ſit in Parliament, but the Legiſlature may be conſtituted on a better plan, than if it were compoſed of them entirely. The conteſt of influence with independence, which exiſts at preſent, has a good effect upon the public mind; it is even advantageous that the hopes of the two parties be cheriſhed by occaſional victory. The vigilance of the people might relax, unleſs the majority of members were thus elected; the admiſſion of the Catholics to the right of ſuffrage, by opening all the Counties, ſeveral Corporations and many Boroughs will, I apprehend, place the elections on this footing. But the intereſt of the different orders may be cemented, contradictions reconciled, and the freedom of the whole preſerved admirably, although many be introduced into the Houſe, either by the recommendation of a Patron, who muſt diſcern ſome cauſe of ſelection, or by means which it may not be correct to mention. Another article in the reform cannot be too much reprobated, the compenſation to borough Proprietors. A great new debt, and of courſe a great additional intereſt would be impoſed on a ſpeculation, which the event will certainly prove to be deluſive, that it is practicable to eradicate influence. It is not, however, impoſſible to modify the effects of it; and ſuch modification will be obtained by the admiſſion of the Catholics to the right of ſuffrage, by the increaſed public ſpirit of

the nation and by commerce, which it ſeems our inclination, as well as our intereſt, to cultivate.

The candidate for a ſeat in Parliament, muſt in ſome manner recommend himſelf to his intended conſtituents, by the ſacrifice of his time, by acts of hoſpitality or kindneſs; all of theſe are expenſive; but a man is not to be ſuppoſed venal, becauſe he expends money, unleſs the expenditure beyond all proportion exceed his fortune. A lawyer, not of note or merit, who wriggles himſelf into Parliament, may well be ſuſpected; but a miniſter cannot beſtow any preferment ſufficient to induce men of large eſtate, or opulent merchants, deriving conſiderable profits from a conſiderable capital, to ſacrifice the material intereſts of the country. If he had power to bribe thus extenſively, he would not ſtand in need of Parliaments. Nor can it be imagined, that two men of equal fortunes may not act alike independently, if the one has paid a ſum he could afford for a peaceable return; and the other incurred a double expence, accompanied by vaſt labour and loſs of health, during the fatigues and intemperance of a conteſted election. If a mode could be deviſed, which ſhould render the returns perfectly impartial, confine the right of election to men of probity, and freeing every candidate from expence, direct the choice to the moſt unexceptionable; then, indeed, ſubſtantial benefit might be hoped, from altering the manner of electing our repreſentatives. In the impoſſibility of attaining theſe conditions, lies the obſtacle to reform, and until ſome change ſhall be effected in the propenſities of the human mind to partiality, we can expect little more than a tranſfer from one to another deſcription. It is the condition of him who ſeeks by the change of climate to ſhun the corroding anxiety, which ſtill purſues, for his own diſtempered imagination is the ſeat of it. *Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.*

The

The courſe of events, if they be ſuffered to proceed, will bring about exactly that ſpecies of reform, which is adapted to our tempers. The firſt and greateſt of all Revolutions has been produced among us, without the aid of plan or project. *The public ſpirit of the Catholics has been excited.* The controverſy on the French Revolution extended more univerſally in Ireland than any other literary diſcuſſion. The public mind was prepared by the diffuſion of general principles. The publications which attracted moſt notice applied theſe to the particular ſituation of the Catholics; fortunately for that body, the preſent, like other opportunities, was not ſuffered to elapſe. The circumſtances of the times required that ſome perſon ſhould break ſilence. In the courſe of a month after the declaration publiſhed in October, 1791,* the Catholic queſtion made more way in this country than for the ten years preceding. During that period, it had the active and opulent men it has now, and many more diſtinguiſhed perſons whom it has been ſince deprived of; but they never were, and probably never ſhould have been able to bear it beyond its ſeat in Eſſex-ſtreet, without the acceſſion of another deſcription, perſons competent to act upon the public mind, to collect, improve, and concentrate the general ſentiment. The ſyſtem of monopoly was compact, it reſiſted the dull aſſaults of repining importunity; but under the noon of reaſon, the waxen fabric melts and vaniſhes. Without this previous preparation, any attempt to reform would have been nugatory; with it, a much more temperate correction of our inſtitutions will be adequate. If the Adminiſtration were diſpoſed to act erroneouſly, they could not attempt improper meaſures in the face of the preſent temper of the kingdom.

* See page 71.

If the bigotted Convention of 1783 had ſucceeded, in riveting for ever the fetters of the Catholics, with all the ſpecious advantage of reform, Ireland never would have known the controul over power, the degree of freedom from reſtraint, and exemption from influence which exiſt at preſent. Before the two latter are entirely eradicated, it will be neceſſary to aſcertain, that three hundred men in the Houſe of Commons, exonerated from the influence of attachment, will never feel that of any other paſſion, of pride, antipathy, ambition or avarice. Until then we muſt be content to palliate. But a deciſive mode of palliation might be adopted. The influence of Landlord over Tenant, as it exiſts in ſome boroughs, is very natural. It ſecures good treatment to the latter. There might be created a power of transferring Corporations from decayed to flouriſhing places. It might be rendered compulſory on magiſtrates to receive in opulent towns all reſpectable inhabitants. Whilſt towns, of the conſequence and independence of Belfaſt, are not repreſented to their ſatisfaction, ſome murmurs are to be expected. Theſe local regulations, combined with the Catholic emancipation, will produce a very fair repreſentation, as impartial as circumſtances admit, and adequate to all purpoſes of freedom, tranquillity and commerce. I ſhould have obſerved before, that the imputed venality of boroughs muſt neceſſarily limit itſelf. When there ſhall be many monied purchaſers, and that men of landed fortune, ouſted from the counties by the new independent intereſt, ſhall be thrown upon the boroughs; and that theſe alſo, in conſequence of the ſame intereſt, ſhall be diminiſhed in number, the terms of purchaſe muſt riſe ſo high, that no man will hazard them, on the hope of advancing his Fortune.

SUBSTANCE

SUBSTANCE

OF THE

ARGUMENTS

OFFERED TO THE

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLICS,

APRIL 22, 1793,

ON THE

Queſtion whether the Meeting ſhould then be diſſolved.

SUBSTANCE, &c.

IT may aſſiſt our deliberation on this ſubject, that we ſhould conſider attentively two queſtions. Will the ſpirit of the people go with this Aſſembly, in caſe it ſhould incline to protract its exiſtence? Does the hardſhip of our condition require or juſtify a meaſure thus ſtrong and thus extraordinary? If there be in the nation a ſpirit of requiſition, founded in conviction, that, ſubſtantial advantages have not been conceded, it will work its way; there is no neceſſity that we ſhould pioneer for it. Even in that caſe I ſhould recommend to reſign your charge, unleſs called forward by a ſecond nomination. Thus leaving the people free to act or to acquieſce; thus proving that we do not counterfeit a ſentiment, of which the exiſtence may be queſtioned; and thus effectually ſilencing a very probable imputation, that, ambitious to retain the authority we have acquired, we inſtigate a contented people to diſaffection. But, on the other hand, if the ſpirit of demand be exhauſted, and that, generally ſpeaking, the people are content with the favours conferred by the Legiſlature, then, indeed, will it be weak to perſevere. The public voice communicated to you weight and energy; if it forſake you, or if it ſecond you but feebly, your Aſſembly will be the ſpectre of that which had been reſpectable. Languid interference will produce great

miſchief, and no good effect. It will, without any adequate advantage, perpetuate that peeviſhneſs, which has now exiſted too long, and which the greater part of us (I am ſure I feel ſo) are heartily ſick of. It will ſubject the Catholic name to rebuff, and the name of Committee to deriſion. It is not, Gentlemen, the magic ſound of Convention or Committee, nor is it any thing perſonal to yourſelves, reſpectable as you may be; it is by public opinion that you have been floated to importance; be cautious to retire with the ebbing tide. You have ſeen a great name ſubjected to mortification by pertinacity, ſimilar to that againſt which I warn you. When the political influence of the Roman Catholics was inſignificant, I argued and urged the propriety of concentrating it under a diſtinct juriſdiction. I have not ſince changed, but the circumſtances of the country have very materially. You have ſince been reſtored by the juſtice of your King and country, to the privileges which confer political influence. You ought to uſe this acquiſition like other Citizens; if after having been affiliated to the Conſtitution, you ſtill keep aloof; you give the lie to your former complaints, that you conſidered it a moſt ſevere grievance, to be eſtranged from your country, and erected as it were, into a diſtinct nation. I think the influence of the Roman Catholics at this moment too immenſe, to be given in charge to, and wielded by any Council whatſoever. The truſt is too great to receive, or to confer; I would not for one, wiſh to be reſponſible for a charge ſo perilous, of which the confidence is ſo momentous, the exerciſe ſo much expoſed to temptation and to calumny. I dread much that little elſe would reſult from this tribunal, than rendering it compulſory on adminiſtration, to diſtribute patronage among the members; and furniſhing theſe Gentlemen with letters of recommendation to receive ſome degree

of

of favour. To have eſtabliſhed in the country a ſeparate juriſdiction, was at all times a ſtrong meaſure; to have exhibited that juriſdiction in complete array, to Ireland, and to Europe, was a proceeding ſtill more alarming; yet were theſe ſteps, the former, indeed, more than the latter, juſtified to a great extent, by the neceſſity of our condition; we were ſubject to great hardſhips, the effect of great excluſions. It was an apology for ſeeming to uſe our natural ſtrength, the weight I mean of our numbers, that we were deprived of our political ſtrength, or the weight of our property. But that is not the caſe at preſent. We are enabled to purſue every conſtitutional object, by means perfectly reconcileable with the public order, and the genius of our admirable Conſtitution. In theſe circumſtances, we ſhould not act as we did in the very worſt times. There was then a *dignus vindice nodus*, which exiſts not at preſent. Conſider how the internal peace, and the external credit of the country may be affected, if it be underſtood at home or abroad that the people of Ireland of all denominations are not heartily coaleſced and blended. By preſerving your Committee, which will always give the appearance of diſcordance, you loſe more as Iriſhmen than you can gain as Roman Catholics.

It is urged that we ought not to be contented, and that the preſent opportunity has not been improved ſufficiently. If the latter aſſertion be true, the blame lights upon your Negociators, with whom I have no concern. I apprehend that the meaſures of the conceding party have been ſo judiciouſly arranged, that you have no alternative left but to be ſatisfied. Let your negociators account with you, whether it was wiſe to ſuffer the body to be ſevered? or whether it was practicable to prevent it? The claſſes of middle and humble life have obtained the capacity of enjoying all the

privileges which belong to Proteſtants of the ſame conditions. Theſe claſſes are in all political conſiderations taken completely from under you. You never more can uſe the millions, their object is attained, they will not make any vehement exertion in your ſupport: your adverſaries would ſpeedily diſcover the deception, and it would recoil on you. Whatever may have been your paſt reſources, you muſt depend in future on conciliation.

But, gentlemen, it would not be at all conciliatory, to continue your ſeparate juriſdiction, it would be a meaſure of extreme hoſtility. Whenever our farther claim comes forward, I ſhould wiſh it to be advanced by the operation of Conſtituents upon their Repreſentatives. If there be ſtill any intereſts hoſtile to the Roman Catholics, and which may be ſuſpected of uſing influence to check the farther liberality of the legiſlative bodies, I am ſure you furniſh them with arguments againſt you, by preſerving your ſeparate aggregation, whilſt you have ſuch excellent means of individual exertion. This will be denominated a Jacobin Aſſociation. And you ought not at the preſent time to furniſh arms to your antagoniſts, for never more will the terror of your name produce an effect. You will act much more advantageouſly, if you take your ground as individuals. The member of Parliament will ever find it more conſonant to his feelings, more his convenience and his intereſt, to treat with, and capitulate to his immediate neighbours and conſtituents, than to canvas for their ſupport by obſequiouſneſs to a remote junto. The exchange of kind offices between conſtituent and repreſentative blends the nations, and eſtabliſhes an harmony which never can exiſt, if the intercourſe be maintained ſolely by a ſolid maſs in the metropolis, bullying occaſionally and bullied by Government; and, indeed, the good underſtanding between man and man, the reciprocity of attentions, and the

multitude

multitude of circumſtances ariſing therefrom, which ſweeten life, are more valuable than many franchiſes; but it is the malady of the day to ſcowl the mild virtues; to ſubſtitute barren rights for productive happineſs; ſtern ſpeculation for the blandiſhments of ſociety. For Heaven's ſake, let us re-inſtate the man, and circumſcribe the politician!

We have at preſent obtained an ample ſcope for the operation of the degree of influence, which our property gives us. If we are entitled by it to the rank of Legiſlators, it will not be poſſible to prevent us from arriving in turn at that diſtinction; if not, it is idle to agitate the country on the ſubject. Why ſhould a meeting, founded in pure democracy, attempt to urge the rights of the ariſtocracy? You have been conſtituted by the voices of all the people indiſcriminately collected, of courſe the loweſt orders muſt have preponderated; you have upon all occaſions deduced your miſſion and your importance from the Democracy of the Catholics. What has a democratic aſſembly to do with the privileges of the Ariſtocracy? How can you pretend to urge the claim of the Catholic Peers to ſit in the one Houſe, or of the leading Commoners in the other? Why ſhould you in the name of the millions ſolicit that in which the millions have no concern? Let ambition fight its own battles, truſt me, rank and talents will be found ſtrong enough for the obſtacles they have to encounter. You have now received the privileges of middle property, becauſe generally ſpeaking, that is the rank you hold in the country; your peculiar ſituation pointed out to you, this exact meaſure of your wants, and to the ſtate, the propriety of this exact conceſſion. When the Catholics at the bar diſplay that degree of talents, which calls for ſuperior ſituations; theſe will be given up to them, becauſe if a man cannot be king's counſel, he will be counſel againſt the king for the people. And when there ariſe many Catholics of great poſ-

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ſeſſions, they will be received into both Houſes of Parliament, for the Crown will chuſe to aſſociate them to itſelf, by opening the paths of honour and privilege, rather than ſuffer a ſour ſenſe of privation to ferment in their minds. Every man knows and feels the debt, which ſociety owes to him; in the article of perſonal conſideration, we exact rigorouſly. If the decorations uſually annexed to opulence do not follow the reality of it, the injured party will ſeek ſome other mode of vindicating his condition. When a numerous claſs of great landed Proprietors ſhall be formed among us, they will receive the dignities that belong to the ſuperior order, as the Catholics of the preſent day receive the privileges which appertain to mediocrity, in order to prevent a diſpoſition to emigrate, or leſt unconſtitutional principles may take root among them. This will be the ſtate reaſon of a future, as it is of the preſent day. The entire web will unravel of itſelf, for wealth will ever find its own level in importance. The deſtruction of the ſyſtem is laid in a ſeries of cauſe and effect, which nothing can retard but error in the deciſions of this aſſembly; if we purſue intemperately theſe advantages, of which the enjoyment cannot be diffuſed extenſively among us, we will create diſguſt and ſuſpicion in the minds of every reflecting perſon, of every ſect in either kingdom; we do the ſame, if we adopt or encourage fantaſtic politics of any kind. If we hold together, after having attained what was underſtood to be our object, it will be very fair to ſay that ſome danger lurks in the aggregation; "that this great body acts in uniſon "from a community of ambitious views, not a "common ſenſe of unjuſtifiable inconvenience.— "They have gotten that which they pronounced "valuable, who can anſwer to what extent they may "yet proceed in this habitual aggregation?" If we continue to uſe our numbers, together with the political

political influence we have acquired, we muſt neceſſarily aſſume a conſiderable degree of ſuperiority. This is not acting fairly by the country. It is not, what we held out, as terms during the period of our ſolicitation.

You declared, a few days back, your adherence to a government by King, Lords, and Commons. Would it be conſiſtent with that declaration to add, as a fourth eſtate, the Roman Catholic Committee? I mentioned ſlightly at the moment my diſapprobation of the meaſure. I thought it nugatory, becauſe ſuperfluous. I do not reliſh theſe general aſſertions. I ſhould equally think of proclaiming my opinion, that the beſt government of the univerſe was by one almighty, omniſcient ſuperintendance, as that I was attached to the mixed monarchy eſtabliſhed in theſe iſlands; I ſhould think the one point as little to be controverted as the other. Theſe looſe general expreſſions, if they mean any thing, rather invalidate than ſupport the principle, which is ſuppoſed to be implied by them. A Republican may ſay he admires the government of King, Lords, and Commons; becauſe in his idea, theſe may be other names for Preſident, Senate, and Houſe of Repreſentatives. My attachment is to a King, in the preſent ſplendor of Britiſh prerogative; to a Peerage elevated, privileged, and reſpected; to a repreſentation of the wealth, not the numbers; of the intereſt, not the will of the people. Why ſhould the collective ſenſe of the Catholics of Ireland be thus announced, as if their integrity were ſuſpicious, and required to be aſcertained by public notification of their ſentiment? We, of whom the proverbial loyalty lingered with the Houſe of Stuart, when it had not power to enforce, or influence to allure; and when the diffuſion of political light had inſtructed us to transfer our allegiance; we, who varied the object, not the eſſence of our attachment; our fidelity is aſcertained;

that our principle is highly monarchical is a truiſm, which needs not to be announced; I am rather inclined to think that we ought to conſider it an inſult, that our loyalty ſhould be queſtioned. I have digreſſed. Break up this ſeparate juriſdiction. It injures the ſervice of your King, and the credit of your country. To yield to theſe conſiderations would be practical loyalty, practical patriotiſm, of which a ſingle act is more valuable than volumes of that lumber of ſpeculative declarations. I grant that we intend innocently, that is good to ſatisfy our conſciences. But when it ſhall be known abroad, that in Ireland there are two governments, the one of the Proteſtant ſtate, the other of the Catholic Committe, rivals, ſomewhat hoſtile to each other, ſtrangers will not think ſo lightly or innocently of it. The enemy will hold out to his partiſans this emblem of diſunion and diſaffection. He will repreſent us confederating into a diſtinct Republic, that we are courted and yield not. Thus the enemies of our Sovereign will be encouraged in their enterpriſes of hoſtility. The monied man from abroad will heſitate to embark his property in a country in which the ſeeds of diſcord ſeem planted, and which appears thus to be prepared for civil conteſt. This will be the judgement of ſtrangers, to whom our ſecret motives are unknown, and, indeed, they will have reaſon to form this judgement. It is the nature of man to be progreſſive; if this delegation be confirmed, and ſupported vigorouſly (and unleſs it be ſupported vigorouſly, you will ſuffer more than you will gain by the meaſure) the courſe of events, ſimilar to what always occurs, will produce a rivalſhip, in which one repreſentative body muſt vote the other a nuiſance; and then the Catholic and Proteſtant nations are committed upon the event. I take you as to the entire upon two points, your loyalty, which you

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value as your honour; your intereſt, which like other men you are attached to.

I do not conſider this queſtion in the manner that gentlemen ſuppoſed it would have been argued; it was ſtated early in the debate that the wiſhes of Adminiſtration, and of the leading perſons in the country, might be cited to influence our deciſions, but that theſe ought not to weigh with us, becauſe we ſlighted ſimilar admonitions on a former occaſion, and that we are ſuppoſed rather to have been gainers by theſe inſtances of non-compliance. I cannot perceive at preſent in what manner our deciſions are likely to affect the members of Adminiſtration, except as they may impede or promote that which equally concerns us all, the re-eſtabliſhment of public credit, confidence, and tranquillity. Feeble, indeed, would be our pretenſions to the notice and ſupport of our country, if a rule ſo boyiſh and capricious were to influence any part of our deliberations; if we turned aſide from great general principles of policy to make private and perſonal conſiderations the ground and guide of our judgement. Between the propoſed acquieſcence of the preſent and of former periods, the end, which diſcriminates every thing, conſtitutes the difference. To oppoſe the will and meaſures of a miniſter, when they happen not to be conſonant to the public good, or his acts, when they ſeem to incroach on the privileges and ſecurity of the individual, is the right, nay the duty of a freeman; a right of which the poſſeſſion is noble, the exerciſe dignified and manly. But to thwart and counteract every meaſure, merely becauſe it is ſuppoſed to originate with thoſe who are placed over us, or to be acceptable to them, is the pettiſhneſs of a wayward ſchool-boy to his inſtructor. Compliance or reſiſtance are in themſelves things indifferent. They become cenſurable or praiſeworthy, exactly as they happen to be founded in

error or propriety. There are many caſes in which the ſubject muſt identify himſelf with the Government, even although he happen not to favour the individuals who compoſe it. This relation, like thoſe of domeſtic life, is of mutual dependencies. In all eſſentials, whoever is at the helm muſt be ſupported; for inſtance, againſt diſturbers of the public peace, Revolutioniſts, the common enemy or Invaders of private property. He is an ideot who would ſuffer his houſe and goods to be conſumed, becauſe he diſliked his wife, or a lodger in it. So that this argument reſolves itſelf into the original one, is the meaſure right or wrong? On this topic I have been already ſufficiently explicit.

But I could have wiſhed that the preſent argument had not been rendered neceſſary. The very diſcuſſion denotes a reluctance to retire from the ſcene, which to many of our fellow citizens muſt prove ungrateful. I ſee no good reaſon for having convened this aſſembly a ſecond time, but many circumſtances which ought to have diſſuaded men of prudence or reflection from the undertaking. It was deemed adviſeable on a former occaſion to make a ſingle application by an united body, leſt any accidental diverſity of expreſſion in our various petitions might be interpreted one againſt the other. I never diſcerned much weight in the allegation, for neither was petition the only mode by which we could have proceeded, nor did any contrariety appear, when the different diſtricts of the nation expreſſed their ſentiments ſeparately. The mode of acting ſolely by a Convention, eſtabliſhed in this city, ſeemed rather a contrivance for governing the nation through the metropolis. But in the preſent inſtance there exiſts not a ſingle pretext for combined action. Your object is to announce your gratitude. The ſentiment is uniform and general; the expreſſion could not vary; it was need-

leſs to aſſemble for the purpoſe of diſſolving. For as you are not a corporate body, a diſcontinuance of your meetings was tantamount to a formal diſſolution. Your affairs had proceeded through ſo many viciſſitudes and revolutions of parties, each expecting to be conſidered our principal creditor, that it became impoſſible, acting as a body, not to create diſguſt, and provoke cenſure. Within the walls of Parliament we owed favours to Adminiſtration, and favours to oppoſition; it is impoſſible to expreſs ourſelves alike to both, and the ſide to which we incline, receives by this appearance of ſuperior popularity an unfair advantage over the other. Beſides the duty of habitual loyalty, we are indebted to his Majeſty for a moſt critical and well-timed declaration of his paternal regard. That part of the nation which is accuſed of hoſtility to the prerogative, alledges the merit of ſtrenuous zeal and early adoption. How can you take a ſtep as a body, without incurring at either ſide the blame of ingratitude? This is the evil of acting in your general deſignation, which you would have avoided, by appearing in the ſubordinate characters of Counties and Cities. The propriety of one meeting would have balanced the error of another, and none would would have been ſuppoſed to commit the great body of the Catholics of Ireland. I ſay ſuppoſed to commit, for your vote will only be concluſive where it accords with the general ſentiment. You may guide an exiſting opinion, but you cannot compel or create a new one. It was eaſy to have foreſeen that in a democratic aſſembly, of which, as ever muſt be the caſe, many members are arranged under various views and opinions, ſeveral topics would be preſented for diſcuſſion, varying from thoſe propoſed originally. Some, to which it will not prove either politic or wiſe, or, indeed, within the limits of the truſt repoſed in us to affix the name of that part of the nation we are ſuppoſed to repreſent.

I originally foreſaw theſe inconveniencies, and recommended local meetings and addreſſes, the event juſtifies my reaſoning.

I ſhall detain you very little more, merely to expreſs my opinion relative to the bill lately enacted for our advantage. It creates a vaſt revolution in this country, of which the beneficial effects will extend very far indeed. It is, in my opinion, the moſt ſubſtantial advantage acquired by this nation ſince the firſt Britiſh invaſion. Some gentlemen have cenſured the forbearance of the perſons who had the principal management of the buſineſs, and ſeem to think that they did not take ſufficient advantage of the occaſion. I do not coincide with any opinion I have heard on the ſubject. I do not think that the Repreſentative Franchiſe was in any wiſe attainable; in the preſent ſtate of things, I do not think that it is very important; I am ſure it would have been egregious folly to have made the refuſal of it a cauſe of difference with Adminiſtration or with the Legiſlature. We excited no inconſiderable ferment among ourſelves, and weakly ſuppoſed, that becauſe we were warm, all would go right; never adverting that there were others in the country equally ardent, equally paſſionate, and more powerful. The millions produced a wonderful effect on us, we did not recollect or perceive, that of our numbers a conſiderable majority are in extreme indigence. That theſe perſons think nothing about franchiſe, but every thing about ſuſtenance. If the country had been provoked into agitation, and that this order had been brought into active interference, can any ſenſible man ſuppoſe, that they would fight about the qualification for electing members to Parliament? They of whom the daily labour is in general rated as low as is conſiſtent with common humanity, and by whom the Roman Catholic gentleman is conſidered a taſk-maſter, at leaſt not leſs

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ſevere than the Proteſtant. They would have embodied perhaps under our definition of liberty, but when embodied, they would have proceeded rapidly to realize their own ideas of it, indiſcriminate pillage; and this muſt have proved more fatal to our body than to any other; for amongſt us is to be found the greater part of that floating property, which lies more immediately expoſed to this kind of devaſtation, that of the merchant, the farmer, the ſubordinate trader, and the manufacturer. The Catholics of property would never have ſuffered this kind of interference; they would ſooner have ſunk the claim, the cauſe, and the committee in the ocean. Your adverſaries are more ſhrewd than you in politics. They knew your forte and your foible. That you had much influence which you ſeemed inclined to abandon, and little force, which there appeared ſome diſpoſition to employ. The ruling powers conceded to you liberally, but they ſtamped the grant with the evident traces of a government in full vigour. They did not, as might have been expected, concede angrily; but many of the reſerved articles did appear to me to have been excepted from the grant, merely in order to place it beyond queſtion, that Government was ſtrong and able to dictate conditions. You, in fact, virtually preferred a complaint to the King, of his miniſters in this country, and a complaint without foundation; for it is notorious, that the Executive Government in this country could not have given you ſupport, and was therefore no way culpable for not having given you encouragement. I know this was not your intention, you only meant a little tinſel vanity. But this was the fair interpretation of your conduct. Your leaders now acknowledge the injuſtice of their indecorum to the Executive Government, whom at that period they treated and conſidered as foes: they are endeavouring to

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atone at preſent by adulation for their paſt conduct, of which the name is too harſh to bear repetition. I had been myſelf concerned in ſome conciliatory* meaſures, I had obſerved the advantage, and recommended to you the imitation of them. In November 1792, the propriety of conceding to you the right of ſuffrage was generally acknowledged. It is true a limited franchiſe was mentioned. But every man of underſtanding muſt perceive, that it was much more the intereſt of the Proteſtants to give complete, than limited elective franchiſe, for thus the Proteſtant landlord gains the weight of his Catholic tenantry. And it would have been groſsly erroneous to have given political power without communicating alſo the qualification to hold civil offices. So that all the articles conceded by the laſt bill were ſo interwoven and connected one with the other, that the main point being conceded, the reſt followed as neceſſary appendages. Then you profited not any thing by your embaſſy to England, nor by all the effervescence which has taken place ſince the Grand Juries were replied to. But you loſt, firſt, by the encouragement which the enemy derives from the exaggerated repreſentation of your proceedings, and the idea we know to have been held out, that Ireland would have occupied a part of the Britiſh forces; ſecondly, by the panic excited at home among timid monied men, who dreading an imitation of French crimes, from what appeared to them an imitation of French politics, thought it neceſſary to ſecure to themſelves ſums of ſpecie: the former circumſtance has probably emboldened France by the invaſion of Holland to provoke the war. Here is the injury to your foreign

* The reſolutions in particular which were agreed to in Waterford, in September, 1792, which although mild, and tending to preſerve the quiet of that country, were found to have rendered eſſential ſervice to the Catholics.

trade;

trade; the latter has checked the confidence, circulation, and conſumption of manufactures within the country; here is the injury to your domeſtic commerce. Every hand-bill, every advertiſement ſent out, was a caution to the timid man, not to unlock his coffers. At the time I oppoſed theſe meaſures, I oppoſed the embaſſy to England, and ſtill congratulate myſelf on having oppoſed it. I conſidered that mode of tranſmitting our petition, uſeleſs, inflammatory, and indelicate. The oppoſition to us was at that time given up. The neceſſity of relieving us was recognized in both the Britiſh Houſes. In the lower it was introduced by a Nobleman in the confidence of the Miniſter;* in the upper, by a Nobleman whom every Miniſter muſt reſpect, and whom every man in the Britiſh Empire reveres and confides in.† In this ſtate of our affairs, I vehemently reſiſted uſing extraordinary means; complicating our cauſe with, and riſking it on, a court etiquette; I ſtated to you at the time, that by adopting this meaſure, you inſulted a power which you were not competent to ſhake. Well, you were ſent back to the knees of that identical adminiſtration. After having ſtrutted in England, you returned to crave an audience, and the men who urged you to vehemence before, are now endeavouring to make their peace with the miniſters, who were the objects, laſt December, of envenomed invective. Here you committed an egregious error, and the event again juſtifies the advice which I gave, and which you ſlighted. The next error was, that the perſons who undertook to ſuperintend your affairs, or rather to ſuperſede all others, ſuppoſed the career of negociation to have been very brilliant. They of courſe were eager to monopolize to themſelves the honour of appearing in it. Our body is teeming with ta-

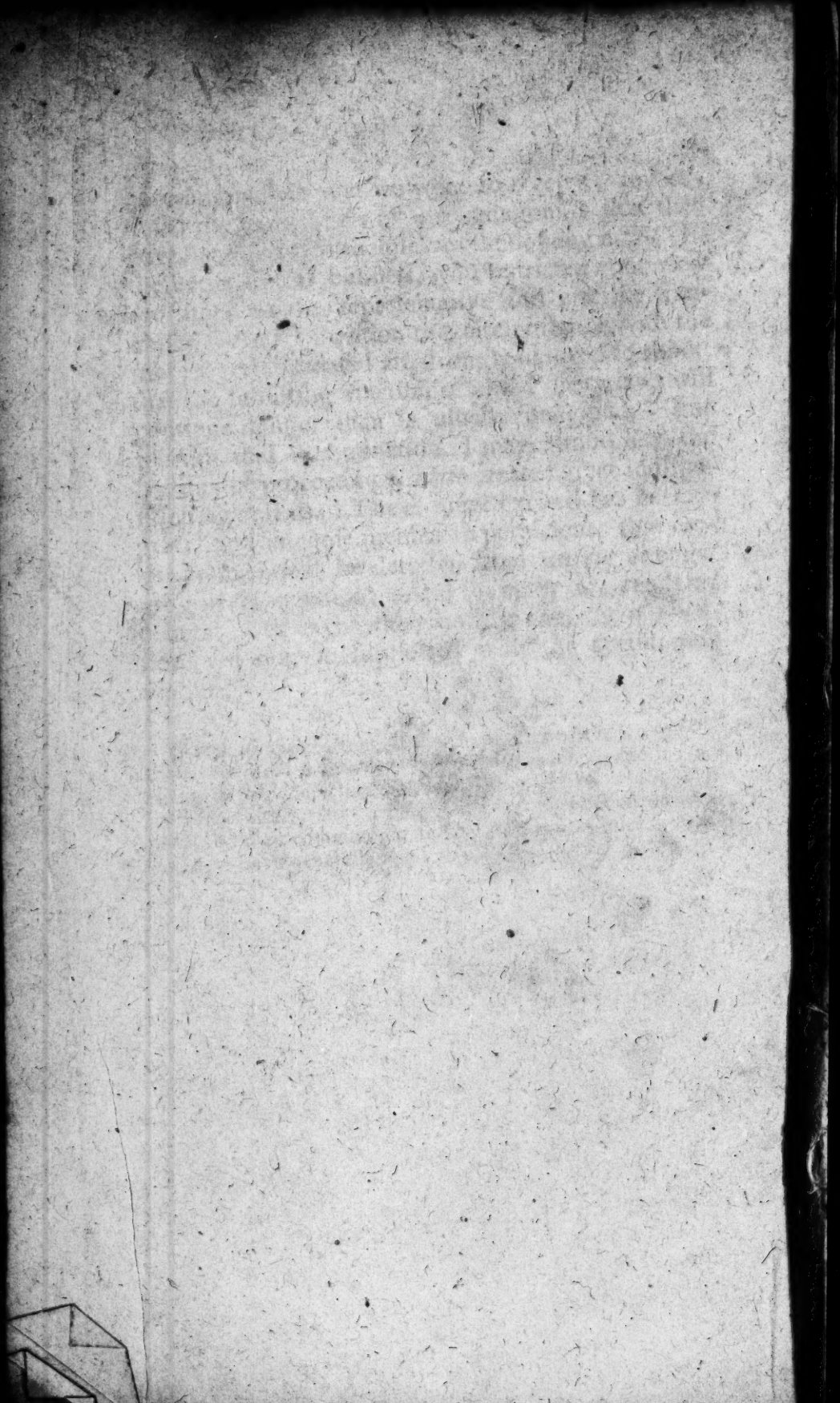
* Lord Carysfort. † Lord Rawdon.

lent;

lent; but as if the law of the land did not oppoſe a ſufficient number of diſcouragements to this envied, unprofitable quality, your managers appeared willing to improve, on the virulence of the old Popery code, by refuſing any conſideration even among ourſelves, to our own literature and ability. They ſeemed more eager to exclude theſe qualities from the competition, than to forward the common cauſe by the aid of men ſuppoſed to be favoured with them. I mean not diſreſpect to any gentleman; but when a treaty was to be concluded, extending to all orders of our communion, and which from the circumſtances of the country, will not, I apprehend, for a long period ſuffer alteration, it ſurely was not wiſe to have committed the entire detail and management to mere country gentlemen and mere merchants. A very ſhrewd man, unleſs he be exerciſed in the details and relations of politics, will ſtart up an indifferent politician; whilſt a mind leſs powerful, habituated to this kind of buſineſs, will be enabled to appear with diſtinction. You have on the very liſts of this committee, many men who promiſe to grace their country, many called forward by this cauſe, on whoſe reputation it roſe, and of whoſe exertions you freely profited. I do not find that in either kingdom they were employed on your deputations, or as privately negociating Agents. Many intelligent perſons here have complained, that they never could procure an accurate inſight into the concluding proceedings. Others of the ſame deſcription, have been treated with ſtill more reſerve, ſome have been excluded entirely from our Committee, whoſe interpoſition would have been more valuable than that of many, the moſt active amongſt us. The effect of this jealouſy appears on the face of the bill of relief, for the entire weight of reſtriction falls upon the liberal, and lettered walks of life, upon the barriſter,

barriſter, and the man who attaches himſelf to general politics. You certainly ought to have placed, in the ſuperintendance of your negociation, men who ſhared deeply in the intereſts of the landed and commercial bodies. But you ought to have combined with them ſome of more technical habits and education; men who had ſtudied all the relations of theſe laws, and of the country; men accuſtomed to reflect and reaſon, and whoſe habits of reaſoning and reflecting had been directed principally to this object. Such perſons would have been qualified as well to urge a claim, as to receive a conceſſion. The more expert and ſagacious animals peaceably aſcend the tree and cull its produce; thoſe leſs enviably gifted by nature, fret and rub, and having made a vehement concuſſion at the bottom, pick up the fruit which drops accidentally. If the precautions I have mentioned had been obſerved; and if a fair communication had been maintained with the leading perſons in the country; even with gentlemen who oppoſed us, and whom we have treated with unneceſſary and inexpedient hoſtility; I entertain very little doubt that we might have removed ſeveral of the exceptions, which it were eaſy to prove not of ſufficient importance to the ſtate to have been reſerved, although individuals of our communion might derive great advantage from the conceſſion. It was wrong ever to have introduced ill humour or vehemence into our proceedings, becauſe at beſt they were unneceſſary, and the temper and acts of the preſent day prove, that the ſtrong language of the laſt meeting was mere vapour, which we had neither the means nor inclination to enforce. I congratulate you that a more reaſonable conduct ſeems likely to prevail, and myſelf, that my opinions of that day have made proſelytes. It is true we were not the aggreſſors in intemperate language; but it might have produced a diſpoſition to forbear-

ance amongſt us that we were to receive; and excuſed the peeviſhneſs of our antagoniſts that they gave, and deemed themſelves the loſing party. In the entire of this buſineſs, you reſtricted your view too much to the repreſentative and elective franchiſes. And I mention this circumſtance with the more regret, becauſe I am ſtrongly induced to think, that the ſubſiſting fraction of the Popery laws will continue longer than is uſually imagined. The warmth and recrimination, I may almoſt ſay the hoſtility of proceedings, have created great indiſpoſition againſt us. The ferment excited has been ſo great, and its conſequences ſo pernicious, that moderate men will be deterred from urging or engaging in the queſtion. And ſo many are rendered content, that even when undertaken, the application will not be ſupported with the accuſtomed vigour.*

* It muſt appear, that, if the Committee of the Roman Catholics had acted in a leſs conſpicuous manner, and had not changed their character from negociating agents, which originally they were, into a body aſſuming juriſdiction over the people of their communion, the arguments here offered would not have been generally applicable.

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